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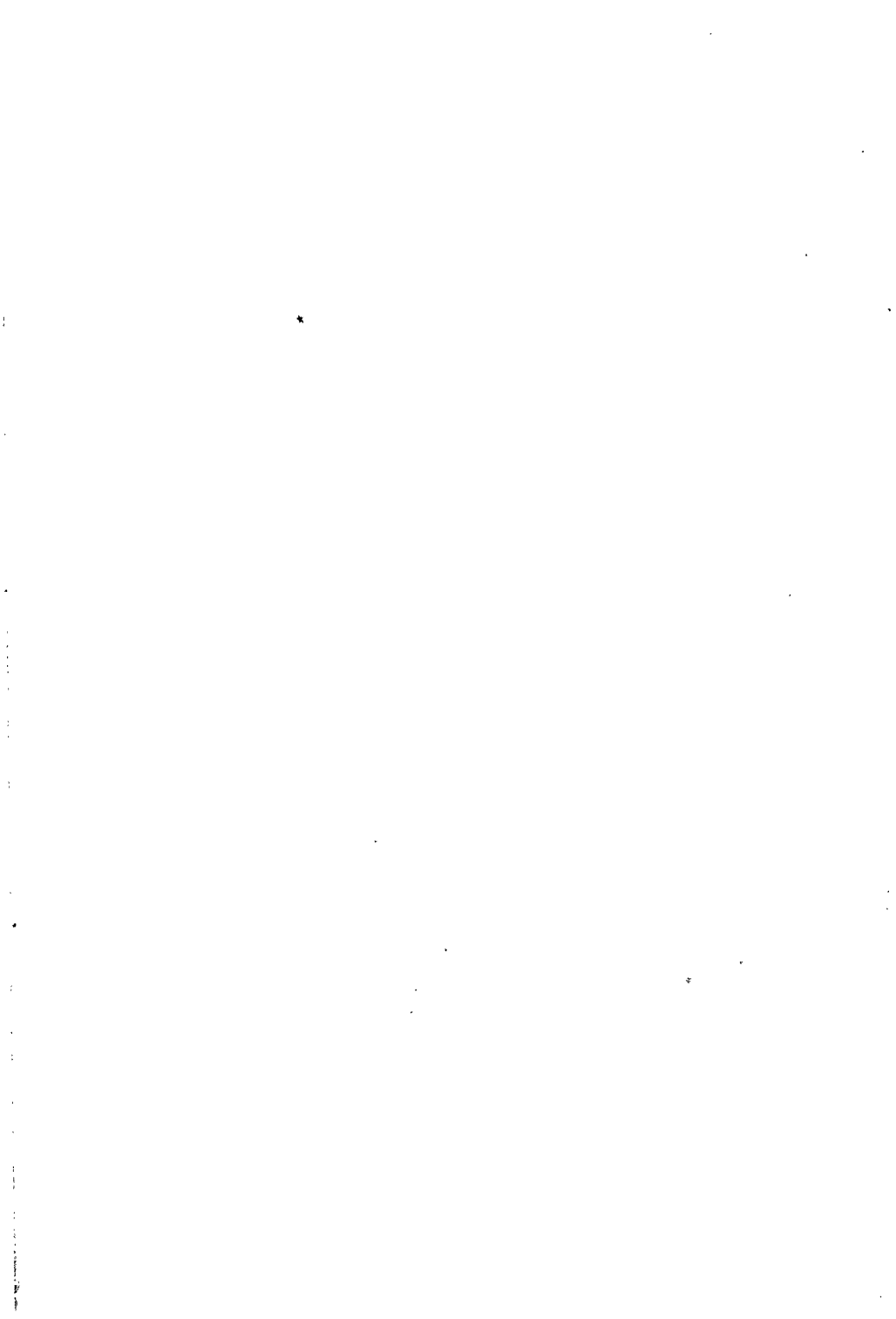
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THE ORIGIN OF ISLAM
IN ITS
CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENT





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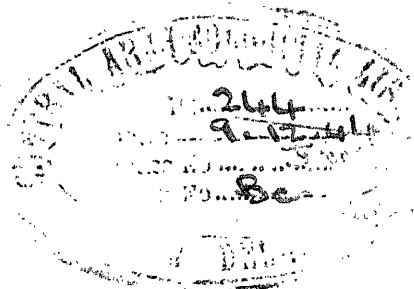
THE ORIGIN OF ISLAM
IN ITS
CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENT

THE GUNNING LECTURES
EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY, 1925

BY

RICHARD BELL, M.A., B.D.

LECTURER IN ARABIC, EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY



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PREFACE

THIS book was prepared as lectures to be given on the Gunning Foundation in connection with the Divinity Hall of Edinburgh University. As actually delivered in the spring of this year the lectures had to be severely compressed. They are now printed in the form in which they were written. I am indebted to the Faculty of Divinity for the opportunity of treating a subject in which I have long been interested. A special word of thanks is due to Professor A. R. S. Kennedy, D.D., to whose teaching, advice and encouragement I owe much. One of the objects of the Gunning Bequest is to "bring out among ministers the fruits of study in Science, Philosophy, Language, Antiquity, and Sociology". If any restriction is implied in that wide definition it is that the subject of study should not be directly theological. The primary interest of these lectures is historical. The aim has been to present the origin of Islam against a background of surrounding Christianity. In some ways that point of view has proved more fruitful than I had expected. Instead of discovering, as I set out to discover, what was the nature of the contact which Muhammad had had with Christianity before he began the composition of the Qur'ān, I found

that the Qur'ān itself contains the record of his efforts to reach a meagre knowledge of the great religion which surrounded Arabia, and that the recognition of this leads, as I believe, to the explanation of one or two things in the Qur'ān and in the Prophet's career which have hitherto been obscure. The Qur'ān having thus developed unexpected interest, has occupied more space than I had originally designed to give it. In quoting from it, I have in some passages, particularly those from the earlier surahs, given my own interpretation of the Arabic; in others the rendering of Rodwell or of Sale has been adopted.

The transliteration of Arabic names is always a difficulty. I have not sought to be pedantically accurate, but have been content to adopt forms already current in English, or to represent the Arabic spelling by the nearest equivalent in Roman characters. Diacritical points have, however, sometimes been used. Any inconsistencies which have thus crept in will not, I hope, be found confusing. Where an Arabic word or phrase has had to be discussed, I have aimed at greater accuracy in transliteration.

I have tried not to overload the text with footnotes; and while I hope the essential references are given, I have omitted to refer to many books from which I have received help.

RICHARD BELL.

November 1925.

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LECTURE I

THE EASTERN CHURCH AND THE CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENT OF ARABIA

FROM one point of view the triumph of Islam in the East in the seventh century A.D. may be regarded as the judgement of history upon a degenerate Christianity. The degeneration of the Church may be said to have begun in the fourth century. The seeds of it were present earlier, but they could not well develop in a persecuted Church. When the Church was freed from the danger of persecution by the accession of Constantine, they began to develop rapidly. To my mind the evil was not, as is often held, the alliance of the Church with the State, or at any rate not that in itself. True, the fact that Christianity became then the recognised and prevailing religion, brought worldliness into the Church. That would probably have happened apart from any relation to the State so soon as Christianity ceased to be persecuted as such, and by its own success became fashionable. It is true too that ultimately the alliance of Church and State became so close that the bishops and other high dignitaries of the Church became, in a manner, State officials. So much was the

Church a part of the Roman Empire, that the acceptance of Christianity was regarded as a sign of subserviency to the latter. That fact is not without its significance in trying to realise conditions in Arabia in the time of Muhammad. It helps to explain the readiness with which even Christian Arabs accepted an independent Arabian prophet. It also no doubt played a part in forming Muhammad's ideas of what religion was. If we sometimes feel ourselves brought up with a shock against the fact that Islam is apparently incurably political, is, as we say, not only a religion but a state, we must remember that that was what Muhammad saw in Christianity, and also what he gathered from the Old Testament.

From the beginning of the fourth century the Church was troubled by doctrinal disputes. The Arian controversy was already raging when Constantine became sole emperor. One of his first acts was to summon the Council of Nicæa for the purpose of pacifying and reuniting the Church. Under the influence of the profound intellect and strong personality of Athanasius it resulted in the proclamation of the Homoousion. Some have deplored that the faith of the Church was thus wedded to philosophy, and that the way was opened to the intellectual speculation which transformed the simple gospel of divine love into a dogmatic system which appealed to the mind rather than to the heart. But the intellectual interpretation and justification of its faith is a task which the Church can never avoid. Intellectual speculation had very early begun to

lay hold upon Christian beliefs, and to fit them into varying systems, sometimes by the exercise of considerable violence. The alternative for the Church was not that of expressing its faith in terms of the prevailing philosophy or refraining from doing so. It was that between finding an adequate expression or being content with inadequate ones. The proclamation of the Homousion at Nicæa was certainly a great victory for Monotheism and sane thinking. The growing worship of Christ as a Divine Being was at once justified and robbed of its idolatrous character by defining the Christ who was worshipped to be the Son of God, of one substance with the Father. In the language of philosophy it was the equivalent of the religious dictum of Paul that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.¹

The decision of Nicæa did not settle the question. A period of acute controversy followed. Other questions also pressed for solution. The Holy Spirit was readily admitted to be likewise of one substance with the Father. But what was the relation between the three Persons? The worship of three separate divine entities being inadmissible, what distinctions in the Godhead did the facts of Christ and the Holy Spirit imply? That was the form in which the problem of reaching an adequate conception of God presented itself to the Christian thinkers of the fourth century. On the other hand, if God was incarnate in Jesus Christ, what was the relation between the divine and the human in Him?

¹ 2 Corinthians v. 19.

That question, which really involves the problem of the nature of human personality in which the present day is so much interested, was even more fruitful of controversy than the other. Throughout the fifth and sixth centuries it disturbed the Church.

In the mazes of these intellectual and philosophical problems the Eastern Church lost itself. It was rent by internal strife and patent schism. It lost the fine edge of its religious feeling and the concentration of its moral energy. That in spite of its intellectual superiority it was weak in moral and religious insight, when called upon to meet the onslaught of Islam the treatment of that religion by John of Damascus furnishes proof. He regards it simply as a kind of bastard Christianity, which is sufficiently refuted by the absurdities contained in the Qur'ān, and the defects of its intellectual conception of God. For the dynamic force and moral passion of this new religion which was conquering the world around him he has no eyes at all.

It would, however, be one-sided to say that the weakness of the Church was due to the intrusion of Greek philosophy and speculation. It is not a defect in a Church that it is characterised by intellectual activity. Nor is what we call intellectualism in religion due to excess of intellectual activity so much as to its defect. The intellectual life of the Church in those centuries became more and more restricted by the twin forces of tradition and fanaticism. Dogma took the place of thought. The trouble lay not so much in intellectual activity and

speculation as in the impatience of the Church with any manifestation of independent thought on religious matters, and the haste with which it rushed to close the intellectual account by enforcing creeds upon hesitating brethren. No doubt this was to some extent due to State policy which aimed at a united Church. That gave opportunity to worldly, ambitious, and self-proud prelates to wield a power which they would not otherwise have had. But the root of the evil was the Church's own desire to live in bondage, and the determination of the parties within it that the type of bondage should be that which they approved. The Christians of those ages, proud in the possession of what they believed to be the truth, appear to have lost faith in the power of the truth ultimately to triumph over error, and the duty of love towards fellow-men, not to speak of fellow-Christians, was forgotten in the zeal for orthodoxy. The power of the secular arm being available to the party which held the upper hand, all parties were only too ready to call in the help of that power against their opponents when opportunity favoured them. The persecution of Christian by Christian, if less bloody, was if anything more bitter in spirit than the persecution of Christian by Pagan had formerly been.

Thus the speculations of theologians became the watchwords of party strife—the seals of orthodoxy, forcibly stamped upon many who little understood them. Those intricate questions as to the economy of the divine nature, and the relation of the divine and the human in Jesus

Christ, became the shuttlecock of warring parties, and men who, even if in error on some points, might have served the Church well as quiet scholars or active bishops, being persecuted and made martyrs of, became the objects of separatist veneration. "When the curiosity of men", says the historian, Louis Duchesne,¹ "became excited about the mystery of Christ, when the indiscretion of theologians laid upon the dissecting table the gentle Saviour who offers Himself to our love and our imitation rather than to our philosophic investigation, these investigations ought at least to have been conducted quietly by men of acknowledged competence and prudence far from crowds and quarrels. The contrary happened. Religious passions let loose, conflicts of metropolitans, rivalries of ecclesiastical potentates, noisy councils, imperial laws, deprivations, exiles, riots, schisms—these are the conditions under which the Greek theologians studied the dogma of the Incarnation. And if one turns to look at the result of their quarrels one sees at the end of the perspective the Oriental Church irreparably divided, the Christian Empire dismembered, the lieutenants of Muhammad trampling Syria and Egypt underfoot. Such was the price of these metaphysical exercises."

Into the history and meaning of these controversies we need not enter further than to indicate their bearing on the situation at the time of the rise of Muhammad. In the Trinitarian disputes of the fourth century we are not much interested in this connection. They were bitter

¹ Duchesne, *Histoire de l'Église*, iii. p. 323 f.

enough while they lasted, and were the occasion of the first manifestation within the Church of the persecuting spirit which ultimately wrought such havoc. But long before the rise of Islam the doctrine of the Trinity had been settled, and the dispute had passed to other subjects. Muhammad certainly misunderstood the doctrine and regarded it as tritheistic. But as I have come to the conclusion that it was late in his career before he came into contact with it, when in any case the die was cast which determined his attitude to Christianity, I do not ascribe to that so much importance as is sometimes assigned to it. The main result of the Trinitarian disputes so far as we are concerned here, was that they led, by the canvassing of the two parties throughout the Empire and on its outskirts, to an extension of the knowledge of Christianity in the south of Arabia and probably also in Abyssinia.

We are more directly interested in the other question which troubled the Church at a later period. In general it may be said that the views of theologians as to the Person of Christ were not irreconcilable. If only there had arisen another Athanasius to guide the thought of the Church, men might have realised that, though using different language, they really meant the same thing. But no such personality arose in the fifth and sixth centuries. The East was conservative in the use of language and viewed with suspicion some of the terms and phrases which came into use in Alexandria and elsewhere. There was, too, a far-reaching difference of

emphasis. The Eastern school, of which Antioch was originally the centre, devoted itself to the exegesis of Scripture, and just as in modern days our preoccupation with the Bible has led us again to emphasise the importance of the man Jesus, so the thinkers of the school of Antioch insisted on the reality of humanity in Jesus Christ. There was no intention of thereby doing detriment to His divinity. For them divinity and humanity were distinct "natures" (*phuseis*), both of which were real and both of which inhered in Jesus Christ. Popularly we may suspect that, as controversy increased, the crux of the position came to be regarded as being that Jesus was a man. There are at least indications that some Eastern Christians laid stress on that. On the other hand, the Alexandrian school, with its interest in philosophy, laid emphasis on the unity of the Incarnate Word. Their formula was: "One nature (*phusis*) incarnate of God the Word". It will be noticed that both schools used the term "nature" (*phusis*), but they used it in different senses. For the Antiocheans "nature" meant an abstract quality or set of qualities. The Alexandrians were thinking rather of the concrete personality. What they insisted on was, in later phraseology, the unity of the Person of Christ. We have to remember that men were working with a theological terminology which was only in process of formation.

Conflict was ultimately provoked by the use of certain phrases of a more or less popular character. By the Alexandrians, epithets appropriate to the Divine Word were without scruple applied

to Jesus in His aspect as man. As popular piety is always impatient of fine distinctions and inclines to the unconditional assertion that Jesus is God, this habit grew, especially among the monks of Egypt and of the Syrian desert. One of the terms which came into common use in these circles was the epithet *theotokos* (Mother of God) applied to the Virgin Mary. From the Alexandrian point of view that seemed quite allowable, even natural. But the Easterns regarded it as suspicious if not absurd, as indeed from their point of view it was.

In 428, Nestorius, a monk from the neighbourhood of Antioch, was appointed Patriarch of Constantinople. He showed himself zealous against heretics. It was not long before he found himself accused of heresy. He had brought with him some Eastern clergy, and one of them began to preach against the use of the term *theotokos*. Protests were raised and Nestorius defended his subordinate. Cyrill, Patriarch of Alexandria, jealous already of Nestorius, intervened in the troubles which ensued. A Council was summoned to meet at Ephesus in 431. The Syrian bishops were delayed in their journey, and Cyrill, backed by his Egyptian contingent, and supported by the bishops of Asia Minor who were jealous of the authority of Constantinople, constituted a Council without them. Nestorius refused to attend and was condemned. The Syrians, having arrived, held a Council with Nestorius and condemned Cyrill. Cyrill, however, had won the victory. Nestorius was definitely deposed. Cyrill escaped to Alexandria and remained secure. In a few years' time an accommodation was reached.

Cyrrill made concessions or offered explanations of his doctrine which the Syrians accepted. But they had to consent to see Nestorius driven into banishment. Dragged and driven from place to place, the rest of the deposed patriarch's life was miserable. He never ceased to protest that he did not hold the doctrines attributed to him. But he had given his name to a schism. His irreconcilable supporters, driven from Syria, found a refuge and congenial soil for their teaching in the Church farther east. The East in its conservatism still clung to the Syrian type of thought which it had learned from Theodore of Mopsuestia and his school. It recoiled from the doctrine of the "one nature". Under the influence of this fresh influx of Antiochean thought, the Church whose centres of learning were at Edessa and Nisibis became definitely Nestorian, and when later the Nestorians were driven from Edessa they found refuge within the Persian Empire. The Church of the Euphrates valley and farther east was cut off from the Church of the Empire, not only by a different political allegiance, but by a difference of creed.

Peace did not long prevail even in the Church within the Empire. Dioscuros, who succeeded Cyrrill as Patriarch of Alexandria, made himself obnoxious by the bitterness with which he proceeded against those whom he suspected of Nestorianism; and the doctrine of the "one nature" ran into extremes which gave pause even to those who had followed Cyrrill. The Council of Chalcedon, held in A.D. 451 to deal with these and other matters, instead of pacify-

ing the Church in the East, added fuel to the fire. For while it condemned Nestorius it recognised the two natures, and even used the phrase in its formula. The one Lord Jesus Christ is declared to be "in two natures". Trouble almost immediately began in Palestine. For the monks and the populace had become strongly attached to the "one nature". Juvenal, the Bishop of Jerusalem, who had consented to the Chalcedonian formula, was driven from his see, and the city was sacked by a mob. The supporters of the formula, backed by the power of the State, naturally strove to maintain and further to assert their position. The contest swayed backwards and forwards. But the mass of the population retained their sympathy with the Monophysite view. In Egypt the same thing happened. In spite of persecution the strict Monophysites maintained themselves, and in course of time formed a separate Church, which included the great mass of the Copts, the native population, while the Melkite or official Church wielded influence practically only with the official class.

To some of the events in the long struggle, especially in Syria, I shall have to refer later. Here it is sufficient to point out that it was from the attempt to impose the Chalcedonian formula, and from the bitter partisanship that grew around the phrases "one nature" and "two natures", that the formation of the separate Churches of the East, the Coptic, the Syrian Monophysite or Jacobite, and also the Armenian, may be said to have begun. Several attempts were made to heal the breach; and as we shall see, at the very end,

when Islam was already storming at the frontiers, a final attempt was being made to transcend the controversy and find the unity of Christ in the Will (the Monothelite position). But in general it may be said that concessions came too late when events had already embittered parties, and the methods used to introduce them embittered feelings still more and made confusion worse confounded.

Into the formation of these separate Monophysite Churches there entered more than merely intellectual disputes and doctrinal differences. Personal sympathies and indignation at the treatment meted out to favourite bishops played their part. Probably, too, behind all was a dim feeling of nationality. The feeling of independence and the character of the population was expressing itself in religion, and being repressed became only the more obstinate in opposition.

However that may be, the result was that when Islam arrived it found both in Syria and in Egypt a divided Church, embittered feelings which made Christians more eager to triumph over fellow-Christians whom they regarded as heretics, than to combine against a common foe, and a lukewarmness on the part of the native population towards a government which had for long tried alternately to cajole and to force them into acceptance of a hated doctrine.

The sophisticated Christianity of Greek speculation and dogmatism had not only failed to capture Arabia, but had undermined the power of resistance of both Church and Empire, when a new religion sprang from the soil of Arabia

itself and rose in its youthful strength to challenge both. Nor must the blame for this result be laid entirely upon the Churches of the East which we are accustomed to regard as heretical. The great Church of the Empire must bear its share, and perhaps the major share, of the guilt.

But if Islam may thus be regarded as a hostile force, whose irruption into the cultured lands of the East was made easy by the pride and unloveliness of a debased Christianity, from another point of view it may be regarded as in part at least the fruit of Christianity itself. Its appearance is evidence of the germinal force of certain great religious ideas, most of which are common to Judaism and to Christianity. It is a remarkable fact that the three great Monotheistic religions of the world are of Semitic origin and took their rise on the confines of the Arabian Peninsula. Some have suggested that the monotony of the desert is conducive to the idea that man and the world are subject to a single divine power. But the desert does not naturally produce Monotheism any more than does the sea, or the steppe, the mountain, or the plain. The real source of the world's great religions is in history, in the reaction of men's spirits to the course of events, or, in other words, to the divine education of the race. These three great faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Muhammadanism, are historically connected, and the root from which they all sprang is to be found in the prophetic impulse which the course of history called forth amongst the people of Israel.

That both Judaism and Christianity played a

part in forming the doctrine of Islam and in preparing the spiritual soil of Arabia for its reception has long been recognised. How much influence is to be attributed to the one, and how much to the other, is difficult to decide. For much is common to both, and we have to remember that there were many forms of Christianity intermediate between the orthodox Church of the seventh century and the Judaism out of which it sprang, and it was in the East, on the confines of Arabia, that we know these Judaistic forms of Christianity to have longest maintained themselves. Some things in the Qur'ān and in Islam which appear specially Jewish, may really have come through nominally Christian channels. But even with that allowance there is no doubt about the large influence exercised by Judaism. There were Jews in Arabia long before Muhammad's time. In Medina they were numerous, and the fact that many of these Medinan Jews seem to have been proselytes rather than Jews by race, shows that Judaism as a religion had some attraction for the Arabs. For a trading community like Mecca—the birthplace of Muhammad and of his religion—the evidence of the presence of Jews is strangely scanty. But we know that for some time after the prophet and his followers emigrated to Medina, and even for some time before, he was in close and friendly relations with the Jews of that place.

It is therefore not with any desire to depreciate the influence of Judaism that I intend to devote myself mainly to the question of the relation between Christianity and Islam. The evidence

of its influence upon Muhammad is not quite so clear, but I hope to show that if its direct effect upon the prophet himself was perhaps not so great as that of Judaism, its effect in creating the atmosphere in which Islam took shape was probably of greater import. A consideration of the situation of Arabia in relation to Christianity will serve to show that the influence of that religion in preparing the spiritual soil of Arabia for the birth of the new religion and its reception was of very great importance.

Concerning the introduction of Christianity into Arabia very little is known with certainty. Arabians are said in the Book of Acts¹ to have been present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and to have heard the Apostles "proclaiming in their own language the mighty works of God". But that passage is too rhetorical to allow us to found much upon it. What was the nature of Paul's visit to Arabia² shortly after his conversion is also very uncertain, as is the length of time which he spent there. The three years which he mentions refers, not to the length of his stay in Arabia, but to the time which elapsed between his conversion and his going up to Jerusalem, including a period of activity in Damascus. Harnack thinks that the passage implies that he engaged in missionary work there; but I cannot see that that is a necessary inference. It seems much more likely that Paul, after the great change in his inner mind, withdrew to quiet and solitude for a time, to make clear to himself what the experience through which he had passed

¹ Acts ii. 11.

² Galatians i. 17.

really meant, to escape from his former associations and determine his future policy. He mentions his visit not as a proof of his activity, but as helping to make clear the independence of his Christian convictions. "I conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went I up to Jerusalem, but I went away into Arabia; and returned again to Damascus."

The Apostle Bartholomew is said in tradition to have preached in India, and it is fairly generally conceded that India in these traditions means, or at any rate includes, the south of Arabia. But the traditions themselves are regarded as too legendary to be accepted as furnishing any historical information that can be relied on.

It would, however, take too long to examine the various notices of Arab Christians and of Christianity within the bounds of Arabia in the early centuries. The sum of the matter seems to be that the Church gained no really independent footing amongst the Arabs at all. What Harnack says of the first three centuries remains on the whole true down to the time of Muhammad: "Churches are only to be sought in those districts in which there were citizens of mixed Arab, Greek, and Roman population, where a higher form of culture was to be found".¹ Père Cheikho has lately undertaken to show that practically the whole of Arabia was Christian in pre-Muhammadan times, and has collected a multitude of references from pre-Islamic poets and statements from Christian and Moslem historians to show that many tribes were Christianised. He

¹ Harnack, *Mission und Ausbreitung*, ii. p. 127.

has succeeded in bringing together an impressive amount of material. But it does not suffice to show that Christianity had any deep hold upon the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula proper. Harnack's statement, that "there are no pre-Muhammadan translations of the Bible into Arabic—and that is strong proof that Christianity had not found any footing at all among the Arabs in early times", is fairly conclusive. It is borne out by study of conditions at a later period. The language of Christianity in the East was Aramaic (or Syriac), and there is no evidence of a Christian Church using Arabic in its services. The nature of Muhammad's own mission, which was to be the Prophet of his own people, and to give to them a Holy Book in their own language, is confirmation of that point of view. What we have to do with is not a native Arab Church, or any deep impression of Christianity upon the Arab tribes, though some of them were Christian in name, but rather with Christian Churches on the confines of Arabia exercising upon the ruder inhabitants of the Peninsula a certain amount of influence and attraction. In this way a certain knowledge of Christianity must have been diffused throughout Arabia.

This influence of Christianity upon Arabia came principally from three centres, viz. Syria in the north-west, Mesopotamia in the north-east, and Abyssinia in the west, which may have exercised its influence directly across the Red Sea, but did so principally, as we shall see, by way of Yaman in the south, which was for a time subject to an Abyssinian dynasty.

SYRIA

First and most important for our purpose was the Church in Syria, including Palestine. This had from very early days been one of the chief centres of Christianity, and from its first foundation in Jerusalem, Damascus, and Antioch, the Church had spread eastwards to the confines of the Arabian desert. Before the end of the third century we hear of bishoprics in Bostra beyond the Jordan, and in Palmyra, almost midway between Syria and Mesopotamia. Within the bounds of the Roman Empire in Syria we may assume that in the course of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries Christianity had become fairly general, and must have extended to the more or less settled Arabs who dwelt under the protection of Roman power. It is only natural to suppose that the religion of the great Byzantine Empire would exercise by its glamour considerable attraction and influence on the tribes of the wilderness itself. These tribes often had their kin settled within the bounds of the Empire. Dussaud¹ has shown that for ages there was a constant infusion of nomads into the settled country. When pasture grew scarce in the desert they retired with their flocks to the more cultivated land, and with the return of spring, when the rains caused the desert to cover itself with vegetation, they led them out to their nomad pasturages again. Thus there was what we may call a semi-nomad population, many of whom ultimately settled down to agricultural or even town life. The

¹ Dussaud (R.), *Les Arabes avant l'Islam en Syrie*.

population of Syria was therefore always largely Arab in character, and there was always close intercourse along the border between the desert and the sown. It was probably from this more or less settled Arab population that the bearers of the Arab names which appear occasionally in the lists of bishops present at various councils and synods were mostly drawn.

The wild country east of the Jordan, like the deserts of Upper Egypt, became the residence of many Christian hermits and monks. Many monasteries are mentioned along the border of the Roman Empire in that quarter. As we shall see, the monk in his cell was one of the things that attracted the attention of the Arabs, and we may assume that some of these hermits found their way even into the desert and took up their abode there. St. Simeon Stylites was an Arab by race, and though the scene of his spectacular asceticism was the neighbourhood of Antioch, we are told crowds of the desert Arabs flocked to see the wonderful sight of the saint on his pillar, and heard him proclaim the gospel from its top. We can well believe that these pillar saints, of whom Simeon was not the only example, did arouse the curiosity of the primitive-minded people of the desert, that they came to see and that they carried back with them some report of what they had seen and heard. In all these ways, from the settled land of Syria, growing ever more Christian, the knowledge of Christianity must have been continually percolating to the inhabitants of the desert.

Unfortunately the internal history of the

Church in Syria and its borders was not a peaceable one. Arabia (by which probably is meant the Roman province of Arabia, not the land of the nomads) had a reputation in the early Church as a source of heresies. That is perhaps not to be wondered at if we remember that in these regions the Greek and the Semitic mind were in contact, and in a manner in conflict. For the Semitic elements of the Church all along had difficulty in following the subtleties of the Greek intellect. Some of the heresies of early times seem to have had a Semitic origin, such as those of Beryll of Bostra and Paul of Samosata. It was in this district that the Elkasaites appeared. In later times we hear of other kinds of heretics, the Collyridians, and a class of idolatrous worshippers of the Virgin Mary. Our information about these is very meagre, if indeed what we have is not due to Epiphanius' imagination. It is possible, however, that some of the heretical movements persecuted in the Empire may have sought refuge in Arabia and helped to form the soil out of which Islam grew.

The final rupture of the Syrian Church was brought about, as I have already said, by the dispute over the Chalcedonian formula. A landmark in the struggle in Syria is the rejection of the formula by the Synod of Tyre in A.D. 513 (or 515). This was largely due to the influence of Severus, Patriarch of Antioch. He was deposed and driven from his see. But in spite of pressure of all kinds the Christians of those parts continued to recognise him as their Patriarch. At length (c. 530) Justinian seems to have recog-

nised that the persecution of the Monophysites was a mistake. It was weakening his Empire in the East where danger was threatening from the side of Persia. But even a conciliatory policy failed to produce the desired effect in Syria. In 542, Justinian consented to the appointment of two independent Monophysite bishops for the lands on the Arabian frontier, and the schism was not only complete, but recognised. These first recognised Monophysite bishops were Jacobus Baradæus and Theodore. The former especially displayed great organising power, and left such a mark on this independent Monophysite Church that it took his name and is known as Jacobite.

This development was largely rendered possible by the influence of an Arab chief, al-Hārith b. Jabala (or, in the Greek form of the name, Aretas), who with his successors occupied a unique position in these border lands. As perhaps the most important channels by which knowledge of Christianity penetrated into the heart of Arabia radiated from the court of these Ghassānide princes, it is necessary to explain the situation a little.¹

To maintain order amongst the Arab tribes along its frontier the Byzantine Empire evidently found it expedient to subsidise a chief of one of the Arab tribes, and accept his responsibility for the government of the Arabs both within and without the actual border of the Empire. This was useful also as a protection against encroachments on the part of Persia. For in all disputes

¹ Vide Nöldeke, "Die Ghassanischen Fürsten", *Abhandlungen d. k. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, 1887, Abt. ii. pp. 1-63.

between the two Empires an obvious means of annoyance was to stir up the Arabs—always ready for pillaging expeditions—to make incursions into the other's territory. Persia supported a similar "kingdom" in the north-east, and Byzantium supported this dynasty of Arab chiefs in the north-west. Various tribes are mentioned as having held this pre-eminence in Syria under Roman influence. In the sixth century A.D. it was held by the Jafnide branch of the tribe of Ghassān, and al-Hārith, a prince of this house, held power for the long period of forty years (529-569).¹

He was all his days an active protector of the Monophysite Church: a proof probably not so much of his conviction of the truth of the Monophysite position as of the fact that the bulk of the Arabs for whose good behaviour he made himself responsible were Monophysite Christians. The same policy was continued by his son al-Mundhir, who succeeded to his position in A.D. 569 or 570.

How far into Arabia the authority of these princes extended we do not know. The main seat of their court seems to have been at Jabiya in the Jaulan. They had influence over all the Arab tribes in the Roman province of Arabia and Palestine; perhaps also over those of Phœnicia and North Syria. They had interests as far

¹ The Arab writers generally refer to these princes as "kings", but the correct title from the Byzantine point of view seems to have been *phylarchos*. Aretas or al-Hārith had also the high title of *Patrikios* conferred upon him. He played an active part in the wars against Persia, fighting under Belisarius at the battle of Callinicum in 531, and again in the campaign of 541-542.

north as Palmyra and as far south as the Sinai Peninsula. Over the Arab tribes of the interior they would, if we may judge by analogy, only exercise real authority so far as they could make their power dreaded. But no doubt their indirect influence as wealthy and powerful princes of Arab race was considerable. There are indications that they were occasionally able to make themselves felt almost as far south as Medina.

The favour which they enjoyed on the part of the Roman Government at Constantinople was, however, not secure. Al-Hārith himself at one time incurred the suspicion of being less than zealous in the Roman cause. The Byzantine authorities probably did not understand the ways of the Arabs and expected more effective service against Persia than he was able to render with such unstable material. Al-Mundhir fell under still stronger suspicion of double dealing, and the Orthodox Churchmen would not miss the opportunity of fanning the feeling against a Monophysite. He was treacherously taken prisoner at the dedication of a church which he had been invited to attend. The result was anarchy among the Arabs on the Roman border. Probably the Romans had to come to terms with the Jafnide family again, for various later rulers belonging to the same family are mentioned by Arab poets. But we know little more than their names. They never regained the full measure of their former influence. In A.D. 613-614 the Persians completely overran Syria, and this was probably the end of the Ghassānide kingdom. The Roman Empire, which seemed at that time to be almost at the

point of dissolution, revived again under Heraclius, who after an arduous but successful war recovered from Persia the lost provinces. By that time, however (A.D. 629), the Prophet of Medina was already causing trouble on the frontiers of Arabia. Heraclius' attempt to regulate Church matters in Syria and the East had only time to show that the breach was irreconcilable. When the Moslem outburst came a few years later it found the Roman Empire exhausted by a long and desperate struggle, the buffer-state by which it had maintained its influence in Arabia destroyed, and the bulk of the Syrian Arabs, whatever may have been the sincerity of their Monophysite belief, at any rate opposed to the official orthodoxy of Byzantium.

MESOPOTAMIA

To the north-east of the peninsula of Arabia lay another Christian district, partly within the Roman Empire, but principally within the bounds of Persian dominion. A good deal of legend hangs around the introduction of Christianity to Edessa and the country of the Euphrates and the Tigris. But we can safely say that by the end of the third century there was a flourishing Church at Edessa, and that Christianity had already spread down the Euphrates valley and across the Tigris.¹ There were churches at Nisibis, Arbela, Junde-shapur, Kashkar, and at Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the winter capital of the Persian kings, which ultimately became the seat of the **Katholikos** or

¹ For the history of the Church in this region see Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'Empire Perse*, and Wigram, *The Assyrian Church*.

Patriarch of the Nestorian Church. More than once the Church within the Persian Empire had to suffer bitter persecution. Sometimes impelled by suspicion of sympathy between its Christian subjects and the rival Empire of Rome, sometimes stirred by the jealousy of the priests of the Magian religion, and sometimes from mere whim, the Persian Government raged cruelly against it. Nor was it altogether without its doctrinal troubles. But the Syrian type of thought maintained itself, except in Edessa, which was in Roman territory, and from which the supporters of the "two-nature" view of the Person of Christ were violently driven. Within the Persian Empire this type of doctrine prevailed, and taking its name from the deposed patriarch of Constantinople, the Church became definitely Nestorian. This separation in doctrine from the Church of the Roman Empire had at least the advantage of easing to some extent the relations of the Christians with the Persian authorities. In spite of its troubles the Church in those regions had a worthy history. By the end of the sixth century it had extended and deepened its hold so that probably no town of any size remained which had not its church and its bishop.

To what extent the people thus converted to Christianity were Arabs it is impossible to say. The situation here as regards relations between the settled and the nomad population was no doubt much the same as in Syria, and it seems reasonable to suppose that a proportion of the Christians of Mesopotamia were Arabs. Christianity also found its way into the actual territory

of the Arabs from this side. That it established itself far in the heart of the country we cannot say. Missionary activity was apt to arouse the suspicion of the Persian Government. We hear, however, of Pethion, an active missionary (martyred A.D. 447), who worked chiefly in the mountainous district to the east, but also preached in the district of Maisān on the Arabian side of the head of the Persian Gulf, and we know that the Church spread southwards along the Arabian shore of that sea. But the main evidence of the influence of Christianity upon the Arabs of this district is the Church of Hīra. Hīra was the seat of the Lakhmide dynasty, the tributary sovereigns of the Arabs friendly to the Persian Empire corresponding to the Ghassānides in the Roman Syrian borders. The name Hīra, or Hērtha as Nöldeke¹ has pointed out, probably means a movable camp, and that may imply that those princes were originally simply nomad chiefs. But their *hērtha* or camp developed into a fixed town near the situation of the later Kufa. The Christians of Hīra were called 'Ibād (servants or worshippers).² At what date a Christian Church was founded there we do not know, but already in 410 a bishop of Hīra is mentioned as attending a Synod of the Mesopotamian Church. The Lakhmide rulers of Hīra did not, however, adopt Christianity. Unlike their Ghassānide rivals they were tributaries of a non-Christian Empire. Several cases of human sacrifices are mentioned in connection with them, and as late

¹ "Die Ghassanischen Fürsten", p. 48.

² Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser und Araber* (Tabari), p. 24, n. 4.

as the early part of the sixth century al-Mundhir, the Arab king of Hira, sacrificed to al-'Uzza a number of Christian nuns. One of his wives, however, Hind bint Nu'mān, was the daughter of a Ghassānide prince, and remained faithful to Christianity. Her son, 'Amr b. Mundhir, who ruled in Hira from A.D. 554 to 569, was a professed Christian. Hind founded a convent in Hira, a dedicatory inscription from which has been handed down by Yāqūt¹ attesting her piety and that of her son the king. 'Amr's successors, however, did not follow his example. There is evidence that Nu'mān, one of the later kings of Hira, offered human sacrifice to al-'Uzza.

This subsidiary kingdom of Hira was not maintained by the Persians in its pristine independence down to the time of the Moslem invasion. They planted in Hira a Persian Governor to whom the Arab ruler was made subject. The disaffection thus produced opened the way for the incursion of the Moslems and contributed to the ease with which they overran this part of Persian territory.

Christianity had thus in the north-east made some progress amongst the Arab tribes, though it is difficult to estimate the extent of it. Certain tribes are known to have adopted Christianity at least in name, amongst them the Taghlib and certain sections of the great tribe of Bakr b. Wā'il, who later gave their name to Diyārbakr in the north of Mesopotamia, but about the time of Muhammad's appearance seem to have been living in Bahrain at the head of the Persian Gulf.

¹ *Vide* Labourt, p. 206 f.

Further, the court of Hira offered (as did that of Ghassān) an attraction to the poets from many parts of Arabia, and from this centre also a certain knowledge of Christianity must have been carried to the tribes of the interior.

ABYSSINIA

Though separated from Arabia by the Red Sea, the land of Abyssinia nevertheless requires some notice in this sketch of the Christian surroundings of the cradle of Islam. The Semitic population of the western coast of the Red Sea probably found its way thither by gradual infiltration from Arabia.¹ There seems to have been, if not a flourishing trade by sea, at any rate a considerable amount of intercourse. Possibly even in these days there was a trade in slaves from the African coast. Slavery was an institution in pre-Islamic Arabia, and many of the slaves seem to have been of African origin. Bilāl, the first Mu'azzin whose stentorian voice the Prophet made use of to summon the faithful to prayer, is said to have been an Abyssinian, or more probably a negro who had come by way of Abyssinia, who was a slave in Mecca when Muhammad appeared. The close connection which existed for a period during the sixth century between Abyssinia and South Arabia I shall have to refer to again. But it may be noticed here that the Abyssinian expedition (c. 525) which overthrew Dhu Nuwās and re-established Abyssinian lordship over South

¹ Littmann, *Encyc. Rel. and Ethics*, i. p. 55.

Arabia must have made large demands on shipping. As the expedition was undertaken with at least the approval of the Byzantine Emperor, Greek merchants may have been called upon to assist the expedition in this way. But at any rate there must have been a considerable amount of shipping at that time in the Red Sea in order to furnish transport for such a military expedition. The existence of shipping implies a certain amount of communication. The references to ships and trade by sea in the Qur'ān are remarkably frequent. Some nautical terms, such as *baḥr* (sea) and *marsā* (harbour), are similar in Arabic and Ethiopic, and there are a considerable number of words of one kind and another,¹ borrowed by Arabic from Ethiopic, the majority of which are either adopted by Muhammad himself, or were in use before his time. The best proof, however, that Abyssinia requires to be taken into account in dealing with the influence which affected Muhammad is that when his infant community was hard pressed by the hostility of the Meccans it was to Abyssinia that they turned for refuge. A considerable number of them migrated thither for a time to escape the severity of persecution.

Legend surrounds the early history of Abyssinia. Dillmann,² after examining the evidence, comes to the conclusion that the beginnings of the kingdom of Axum (the original nucleus of the

¹ Vide list in Nöldeke, *Neue Beiträge zur semit. Sprachwissenschaft*, p. 60.

² Dillmann, "Über die Anfänge des axumitischen Reiches", *Abhandlungen der k. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, 1878; "Zur Gesch. des ax. Reiches", *ibid.*, 1880.

later Abyssinia) belong to the first century A.D., and that we cannot seriously speak of Christianity in those parts before the age of Constantine. The story of Frumentius given by Rufinus (*Hist. Eccl.* i. c. 9), and repeated by Sozomen (ii. c. 24) and others, is well known. Frumentius and Ædesius were taken as youths by Merope, a philosopher, to visit India. On the return journey the vessel was compelled to put into some port, where the crew were murdered, the two boys alone being saved alive. They were made slaves in the service of the king of the country. By their fidelity they gained his favour and their liberty. They were, however, prevailed upon to remain and undertake the education of the king's son, and later to take charge of the affairs of the kingdom during his minority. During this time Frumentius made inquiries as to whether there were any Christians or Romans in the country, and finding that there were such he treated them with kindness and benevolence. At length both were free to return to their native land. Ædesius returned to Tyre, where he became a presbyter. Frumentius, with the Christians of those far regions on his heart, made his way to Alexandria and laid the matter before Athanasius the bishop. By him and the Alexandrian Church Frumentius was ordained bishop and sent back to take charge of the Church in the country of his sojourn.

The scene of this story is laid in India. By the early Church Historians, however, India is used in a very loose sense, and frequently refers to South Arabia and the lands around

the Red Sea. It is assumed here to refer to Abyssinia. Dillmann indeed thinks that Rufinus' story refers to India proper. He finds difficulty also with the date usually assigned to Frumentius' mission to Abyssinia. What is certain is that (as we learn from Athanasius' Apology), in A.D. 356, Frumentius was bishop in Axum. It looks as if he had been but recently appointed. For Constantius is moving to have him recalled and Athanasius is protesting. Both parties, the Athanasians and the Arians, or semi-Arians, whom the Emperor Constantius favoured, were perhaps seeking at that time to extend their influence. Frumentius is on the Athanasian side, and the Arians wish to counteract the spread of that type of doctrine in those parts. It agrees with this, too, that the position of Christianity in Abyssinia in the period which followed was by no means so commanding as we should expect were the story of Rufinus literally true as referring to Abyssinia. We hear nothing more of Christianity in Abyssinia for another hundred years. The king, Ta-Zena, whose date is probably about the end of the fifth century, appears in one inscription as a pagan, in another as a Christian, so that we may assume that the religion of the reigning house was pagan up to his time. Further, we hear of a conversion of Abyssinia to Christianity in the reign of a certain Aidug, whom Fell (*Z.D.M.G.* 35) identifies with the predecessor of Ta-Zena, Ela-Amida. John of Ephesus (Assemani, *B.O.* i. 362 *seq.*) relates that this Aidug, following upon a vow made in prospect of a military expedition to South Arabia,

made request for a man or men to instruct him and his people in Christianity. The request was gladly granted, and a bishop was sent from Alexandria with several companions. Fell further connects this with the Abyssinian legend of the nine saints by whom a revival of Christianity was brought about, and sets the date about A.D. 480. In any case, the real Christianising of Abyssinia belongs to about this period, and it was brought about by Monophysite Christians. From that period the Church in Abyssinia was certainly Monophysite. But as to its further condition and history we know practically nothing. It is some six centuries thereafter before we begin again to get much light upon Abyssinia. But though history has little to say of it at the time of Muhammad's appearance, it is well to remember that there was, on the other side of the Red Sea, this Christian country, with which the trading community of Mecca had probably fairly frequent communication.

LECTURE II

CHRISTIANITY IN SOUTH ARABIA AND ITS INFLUENCE UPON THE ARABS IN GENERAL

COMING now a little nearer to the actual cradle of Islam, we have to consider how far a knowledge of Christianity had penetrated into the Arabian peninsula itself. The first fact that strikes us here is that Christianity had established itself in the south, and especially in the south-west corner of the peninsula. In a way the existence of a Christian Church here belongs to the Christian encirclement of Arabia rather than to the history of Christianity in Arabia itself. For South Arabia had long been distinct from the actual land of the nomads. For centuries it had been a land of civilisation and the seat of well-established government. How far back its civilisation goes is not yet agreed amongst investigators. But the evidences of Sabæan hegemony go back at least to 800 B.C. About the second century A.D. the Himyarites (the classical Homeritæ) established themselves as the ruling race.

There are various accounts of the introduction of Christianity into this corner of Arabia. Much uncertainty is caused by the vague and general

sense in which the name India is used by Greek and Latin writers.¹ We are hardly ever sure whether it refers to India proper or to South Arabia, to Abyssinia, or to some other part of the African or Asiatic coast. Thus we have the tradition given by Eusebius² that Bartholomew had preached the gospel in India and had left there the Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew, which was still in existence in the time of Pantænus. This may possibly refer to South Arabia. For there were certainly in the first Christian century, and even many centuries earlier, frequent communications of commercial and other kinds between that part of the world and Palestine. Then there is the legend of Phemion given by Tabari,³ according to which an ascetic of that name wandering in Syria was captured by an Arab caravan and carried to Najrân in South Arabia. The earliest really historical account of Christianity in South Arabia, however, has reference to the time at which Frumentius was bishop in Abyssinia. We learn from various sources⁴ that in A.D. 356 Constantius sent an embassy to South Arabia. The leader of it was Theophilus, sometimes further designated as "the Indian". He is said to have belonged to the island of Dibu, which has been until recently identified as lying at the mouth of the Indus.

¹ This unfortunate use of India arises from the fact that the Persians called the Blacks (the Abyssinians with whom they came into contact in South Arabia) by the name of the dark-skinned people who lived nearest to them, *i.e.* Indians. The usage came then to the West through the Syrians (Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser u. Araber*, p. 222).

² *Hist. Eccl.*, Bk. V. ch. 10.

³ Cf. Nöldeke, *Gesch. der Perser u. Araber*, p. 175 ff.

⁴ Philostorgius, *Hist. Eccl.*, Epitome by Photius; Bk. III. ch. 4, etc.

Glaser,¹ however, identifies it with an island on the Arabian coast of the Red Sea near Anfuda. If this be correct it would help to explain why Theophilus was sent on this embassy. He would be practically a native of the country to which it was directed. Coming as a hostage to the Empire in the reign of Constantine, Theophilus had embraced Christianity, adopted the ascetic life, and had been made deacon by Eusebius. Having undertaken the embassy he was invested by his own party (*i.e.* the Arians) with episcopal dignity. The embassy was lavishly fitted out by Constantius, and rich gifts, including two hundred Cappadocian horses, were sent to the king of the Homeritæ. The result is said to have been that the latter adopted Christianity and built three churches out of his own revenues. It is unlikely that the emperor expended so much on a purely religious mission, though it probably had some connection with the Arian and Athanasian disputes which were at that time troubling the Church. Both parties were seeking to extend their influence, and Theophilus is said to have had the further commission to go to Axum and move for the expulsion of Frumentius, the bishop there, who belonged to the Athanasian party. But behind this the real mainspring of the anxiety to introduce Christianity into both Abyssinia and South Arabia lay in international politics and the rivalry between the Roman and the Persian Empires. The adoption of Christianity meant an extension of the influence of Rome. South Arabia was, however, open to the influence of Persia,

¹ *Abyssinier*, p. 167.

and so far as this made use of religious forces it seems to have favoured Judaism as against Christianity. Abyssinia came more exclusively under the influence of Rome, and Christianity made more decided progress there. In course of time the Abyssinians succeeded in establishing their power on the other side of the Red Sea, and it was by supporting their overlordship that the Romans sought to maintain their hold upon South Arabia, while Persia on the other hand sought to foster the spirit of independence among the native population. That was the situation when next we get clear information about the Church in South Arabia. Of the history of Christianity in that district for more than a hundred years after the date of the embassy of Theophilus we know little. But it may be surmised that while the Church there became more closely connected with Abyssinia, it had also relations with Syria. We have seen that it was from Syria and Egypt that the influence came which made the Abyssinian Church definitely Monophysite. The same influences may have extended to South Arabia. At any rate, when next we hear of it, the Church there is also Monophysite, and Jacob of Seruj writes a letter of comfort to the Christians of Najrān, in Syriac, which would seem to imply that that language was at least understood there.

The occasion of that letter was the persecution of the Christians of Najrān, the best known event in the history of the South Arabian Church. The historicity of it has indeed been questioned. But the evidence for it is too clear and definite to

leave any real doubt. An account of it is given in a practically contemporary letter of Simeon of Bēth Arshām to Simeon of Gabbūlā.¹ This letter is regarded as genuine by most scholars, though not as vouching for the absolute accuracy of all that it contains. Simeon, according to his own account, was on an embassy to Mundhir, king of Hira, when an embassy arrived from South Arabia announcing the accession of a new ruler there. The ambassadors related how he had attained the throne, and the measures he had taken against the Christians, and went on to urge Mundhir to adopt the same policy towards them. Simeon writes in order to stir up sympathy, and if possible obtain help for the oppressed Christians.

This persecution is connected with the history of Abyssinian rule in Yaman. For some time before they had held the upper hand there. Dhu Nuwās, who is said to have been a convert to Judaism, but who was in any case a native of Yaman, and relied upon native Himyar support, revolted against them. Taking advantage of the winter time when help could not be sent across the Red Sea, he gained immediate success. Remembering that Abyssinian lordship there was associated with favour to Christianity, we can understand why the Christians became involved. The national uprising associated them with the hated rule of the blacks. The Abyssinian forces

¹ This letter is given by Assemani, *B.O.* vol. i. p. 359 *seq.* The letter of Jacob of Seruj, and a hymn by Johannes Psaltes, translated into Syriac by Paul of Edessa, have been published by Schroeter in *Z.D.M.G.* 31, p. 363 ff. See also Procopius, *De bello Persico*, i. 20. For a discussion of the whole subject see article by Fell in *Z.D.M.G.* 35, p. 1 ff.

in the country having been overthrown, and reinforcements from across the Red Sea being for the time being cut off, Dhu Nuwās turned his attention to the Christian city of Najrān in the north of Yaman. Finding it bravely defended, he had recourse to deception, and gained entrance on the strength of an oath that he would spare the lives of the citizens and allow them the exercise of their religion. The oath was not kept. The Christians are said to have been given the choice of adopting Judaism, or at any rate of acknowledging Jesus Christ to have been merely a man. This may indicate an option of becoming Nestorians, for there were probably Nestorian Christians among the supporters of Dhu Nuwās. The option was, however, refused, and many of the Christians were put to death with great cruelty. The story of the burning trench into which they were forced to leap is, however, not borne out by contemporary evidence. But it must have come early into circulation, for there is in all probability a reference to it in the Qur'ān (Surah lxxxv.). The number of those who suffered has also in some of the accounts been exaggerated, running into thousands. The more moderate number given in the hymn attributed to Johannes Psaltes, viz. over 200, is good evidence of the genuineness of that hymn and its almost contemporary date.

The event may be taken as having happened in October A.D. 523. News of it found its way into the Roman Empire by the channel which has been already mentioned—the letter of Simeon of Bēth Arshām—and also by the report of a

Christian who escaped from Najrān and made his way to Constantinople to lay complaint before the Emperor. To punish the author of this enormity lay in line with the policy of the Empire, and the Abyssinians also were not inclined to allow their influence in South Arabia to be thus overthrown. As a result the Imperial Government encouraged the King of Abyssinia to undertake an expedition against Dhu Nuwās and promised him support. Allowing for the time necessary to make arrangements this expedition would not take place until A.D. 525, the traditional date assigned to it. Dhu Nuwās was completely overthrown and put to death or, according to another less reliable account, threw himself into the sea and perished. Abyssinian overlordship in South Arabia was again established.

For some years thereafter the situation is obscure. Then emerges an Abyssinian ruler of Yaman named Abraha (or Abraham), who held power for upwards of forty years, and whose expedition against Mecca has become famous through the reference to it in the Qur'ān. The story of this expedition is recounted at length by the Arab historians. It is also thought by Nöldeke¹ to be referred to by Procopius in the statement that "Abramus, when at length he had established his power most securely, promised the Emperor Justinian many times to invade the land of Persia, but only once began the journey and then straightway turned back". The object of the expedition thus falls into the network of international politics. The Romans were seeking

¹ *Geschichte der Perser u. Araber*, p. 205. Ref. to Procopius i. 20.

to unite the tribes of Arabia under their influence against Persia.¹ Abraha had probably no objection to using the opportunity to extend his own power in Arabia.

By the Arab historians another object is assigned to the expedition. Abraha had built a great Christian church in San'a, his capital, and sought to make this the centre of pilgrimage for Arabia instead of the pagan Ka'ba at Mecca. This the Meccans resented, and one of them went to San'a and defiled the church. Incensed by this act of vandalism and contempt, Abraha gathered an army and marched to the Hijāz to destroy the Ka'ba. One of the things which impressed the Arab imagination was the presence of an elephant in this army. At the borders of the sacred territory of Mecca, however, the expedition was miraculously overthrown. The elephant refused to go forward, and flocks of birds appeared which pelted the army with stones. If we divest this narrative of its fabulous details, it is quite probable that Abraha, the Abyssinian Christian ruler of Yaman, did endeavour, for the increase of his influence in Arabia, to supplant Mecca as the religious centre of the country by a Christian place of pilgrimage in his own territory—that he built a magnificent church at San'a seems to be a historical fact. The destruction of the rival sanctuary may have been among the objects of his expedition.

Whether the disaster which befell it is to be

¹ Cf. Procop. *l.c.*, "As for the Homeritæ, it was desired that they should establish Caisus (Qais) the fugitive as captain over the Maddeni (Ma'add), and with a great army of their own people and of the Maddene Saracens make an invasion into the land of the Persians".

ascribed to the inhabitants of Mecca, who we are told had deserted the city and taken to the hill-tops, rolling down stones upon the enemy, or to an outbreak of some pestilence—smallpox is mentioned in one account—we cannot determine. But some such disaster certainly happened. The date was A.D. 570 or 571,¹ for by unanimous tradition Muhammad is said to have been born in “the year of the elephant”, *i.e.* the year of Abraha’s expedition. Abraha himself escaped from the disaster to his army, but did not long survive. Close upon his death appears to have followed the fall of the Abyssinian rule in Yaman.² Persia lent its aid to the native leaders against the hated blacks,³ and with their disappearance disappeared also the dominant influence of Christianity in the south-west of Arabia. The Church of Najrān must, however, have maintained itself, for we find that a deputation of Christians from that town appeared in Medina to negotiate terms with Muhammad in the last years of his life.

To sum up, then, Arabia was ringed about with Christian influences. In the south of the peninsula itself Christianity had found a settled footing. Some knowledge of it must have penetrated into the recesses of the peninsula, for Arabia

¹ Nöldeke, *l.c.*, thinks this is much too late, and apparently discards the tradition that Muhammad was born in the year of Abraha’s expedition.

² Fell (*Z.D.M.G.* 35, p. 46 f.) argues that after a temporary overthrow (*c.* A.D. 575) it revived again, and continued till near the end of the century. This may be so, but the evidence does not seem to be conclusive. In Nöldeke’s view the date 575 is too late, for the conquest of Yaman was one of the Roman grievances against the Persians which led to the outbreak of war in A.D. 572 (*l.c.* p. 224).

³ See the romantic story told by Tabari (Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser u. Araber*, p. 220 ff.).

with its desert spaces and nomad population, while secure from political domination, was not shut off entirely from communication with the outside world. Arabs wandered far afield. Imru'ul-Qais, the famous poet, is known to have visited Constantinople. Most of the poets whom we know about were frequent visitors at the courts of Hira and Ghassān, where they gained reward by their eulogies upon the reigning chiefs. No doubt, too, as at the present day, camel riders and caravans continually visited centres of population. Political influences also affected, as we have seen, the religious atmosphere of Arabia. Rome favoured Christianity. Persian influence was against it, except in the form of Nestorianism. The hostility of the Nestorians to the Monophysites, Persia would be quite ready to make use of. Judaism may have been more actively favoured (as Glaser contends). But if so it was only as a means of counteracting Rome. But against both influences there operated the strong feeling of independence which has always characterised the nomad.

From the south, Christianity does not seem to have made much headway; from the north-east it spread down the shores of the Persian Gulf. From the north-west it spread into the northern centre of the peninsula and southward to the shores of the Red Sea, but—and this is important—in spite of traditions to the effect that the picture of Jesus was found on one of the pillars of the Ka'ba, there is no good evidence of any seats of Christianity in the Hijāz or in the near neighbourhood of Mecca or even of Medina.

It is late in his Medinan period when Muhammad comes into negotiation with Christian chiefs and tribes. That shows that they were at a distance from Medina itself. Nor can we assume that even among the tribes which were nominally Christian, any deep grasp of, or attachment to that religion, had been implanted. The Christian dealer, with his supplies of wine, penetrated far into Arabia. He may have done something to spread a knowledge of Christianity, but it is probably also true, as Ali, the son-in-law of the prophet, is said to have remarked, that many professing Christians had learned nothing but the wine-drinking.

If we ask for evidence of the influence of Christianity upon Arab thought and life, the results appear at first sight discouraging. One naturally turns first to the pre-Islamic poets. In their verses one finds indications enough that they knew something about Christianity. They speak often enough of the wine-seller, and sometimes designate him as a Christian.¹ They refer to the externals of Christianity, its churches and places of worship, the wooden gongs or bells which were used to summon worshippers to them, as for instance in the following verses of al-A'sha, a contemporary of Muhammad :

*Many an early cup (glistening) like the eye of a
cock have I drunk with trusty youths in its
curtained chamber while the church-bells rang—*

¹ It may be noted that, in spite of the frequent references to it, wine, in the proper sense, was not native to Arabia. The word for it—*khamr*—is Aramaic, and is one of the many words which indicate the penetration of Aramaic culture into Arabia.

*pure wine like saffron and amber, poured in its glass and mixed, spreading a costly perfume in the house, as if the riders had (just) arrived with it from the sea of Dārīn.*¹

They even mention Christian ceremonies such as they had seen on their visits to the princes of Ghassān :

*We went out to watch the wild (game) around Thu'āla between Ruhayyāt and the pass of Akhrub,
And from afar I perceived a troop, as if they were monks at a festival with fringed robes.*²

This is a variation of the simile in which the long sweeping tails of a herd of wild kine are compared to the long-skirted gowns of a group of girls circling a pillar in a pagan ceremony.³

The religion of these princes is referred to as part of their excellence, as was natural in poems composed in their praise :

*A nature is theirs, God gives the like to no other men—
a wisdom that never sleeps, a bounty that never fails.*

*Their home is in God's own land, his chosen of old :
their faith*

is steadfast : their hope is set on nought but the world to come.

Their sandals are soft and fine, and girded with chastity

¹ Nöldeke, *Delectus*, p. 26.

² Imru'ul-Qais, *vide* Ahlwardt, *Divans of Six Arab Poets*, p. 118.

³ *Vide* C. J. Lyall, *Ancient Arabian Poetry*, p. 93, where another example of a reference to a Christian festival will be found.

*they welcome with garlands sweet the dawn of the Feast of Palms.*¹

The Christian hermit in his cell in the wilderness is frequently referred to, a favourite image being the light seen in the darkness from afar. (This, as we shall see, caught the fancy of Muhammad himself.) Thus Imru'ul-Qais in that poem of his which has been included in the well-known collection, the Mu'allaqāt, says of his beloved that "*in the evening she brightens the darkness, as if she were the lamp of the cell of a monk devoted to God*".² The beloved is also frequently compared to the images seen in Christian churches.³ It is a convention of the desert poets to begin a qasida by the poet representing himself as coming upon the traces of a former encampment where the beloved had at one time dwelt. The half-obliterated marks are frequently compared to writing, and this often brings with it a reference to the sacred books of the monks. For example, one of the poems of Imru'ul-Qais begins thus :

*Stay, let us weep at the remembrance of a loved one and favour (bestowed), at the mark of a camp whose lines have long ago been obliterated. Years have passed over it since I knew it, and it has become like the writing of the Psalms (zubūr) in the books (maṣāḥif = leaves) of the monks.*⁴

¹ An-Nābigha, *vide* Ahlwardt, *op. cit.* p. 3. (C. J. Lyall's translation, *op. cit.* p. 96.)

² Imru'ul-Qais, *Mu'allaqa*, l. 40.

³ *Vide* Fraenkel, *Aramäische Fremdwörter im Arabischen*, p. 271 f.

⁴ Imru'ul-Qais, *vide* Ahlwardt, *op. cit.* p. 161.

Of any deep appreciation of Christianity or of any strong impression made by its ideas upon them personally, we do not find much evidence in the Arab poets, even in those who were nominally Christian. The same applies to Judaism. First impressions of the pre-Islamic poets are therefore discouraging to the idea that either of these religions had obtained much hold in Arabia. But we have to remember that this ancient poetry was very conventional in character. In the oldest specimens we have its form is already fixed; and not only its form, but the very order of the subjects treated of in a poem. Each poem must begin in a certain way, and pass by a recognised route to its main subject, the nature of which, at least, we may suppose to have been likewise prescribed by tradition. The same things are described again and again, the skill of the poet consisting not in finding new themes, but in finding new similes to describe the recognised objects or different words in which to express the old similes. These characteristics are retained until the poetry of the desert dies out. Islam made almost as little impression upon it in the century after Muhammad as Christianity did in the century before his appearance. Evidently its spirit was as much a matter of tradition as its form. It belonged to the old desert life of love and war with its tribal pride and tribal feud. Its spirit was the spirit of the old pagan life. Convention did not allow room for any treatment of religious themes as such. They could hardly be referred to in any other way than that in which we find them referred

to—by way of simile illustrating the well-worn themes. Only now and then did the poet give expression to his attitude to life in a few moralising reflections. The end of a *qasīda* was the recognised place for these, but we sometimes find them in other parts of the poems. Even these are usually of the hard-bitten worldly-wise type appropriate to a condition of things in which a man's fortune and life were apparently at the mercy of chance and blind Fate :

*Aweary am I of life's toil and travail : he who
like me*

*has seen pass of years fourscore, well may he be
sick of life !*

*I know what To-day unfolds, what before it was
Yesterday,*

*but blind do I stand before the knowledge To-
morrow brings.*

*I have seen the Dooms trample men as a blind beast
at random treads*

*—whom they smote, he died : whom they missed,
he lived on to strengthless eld.¹*

So sings Zuhair ; and perhaps we may feel in that a wistfulness of longing for something better which is not very common, and may have been the harbinger of the coming of a better faith. But we do sometimes find among these moralisings a kindlier view of life, and the conviction of a higher justice over-arching man's hard experience. Thus in the same poem of Zuhair we find the following, which almost reminds us of the Qur'ān,

¹ Zuhair, *Mu'allāqa*, ll. 47-49. Translation by C. J. Lyall, *op. cit.* p. 114.

though we must not read the Qur'ānic dogmas into it :

It boots not to hide from God aught evil within your breasts :

it will not be hid—what men would hold back from God, He knows.

It may be its meed comes late : in the Book is the wrong set down

for the reckoning day ; it may be that vengeance is swift and stern.¹

The poet Labīd is one of those in whom the religious temper most frequently appears. He was a contemporary of Muhammad, and in his later years became a Moslem. His poetical work belongs, however, to the days before his conversion. It is an indication that the convention of poetry was felt to be irreligious, that he is said after his conversion to have abjured poetry altogether, and even to have been unwilling to recall his own poems. The following passage is pre-Islamic :

Yea, the righteous shall keep the way of the righteous, and to God turn the steps of all that abideth ;

And to God ye return, ye too : with Him only rest the issues of things and all that they gather.

All that is in His book of knowledge is reckoned, and before Him revealed lies all that is hidden :

Both the day when His gifts of goodness on those whom

He exalts are as palms full-freighted with sweetness,

¹ Zuhair, *Mu'allāqa*, ll. 27-28. Translation by C. J. Lyall, *op. cit.* p. 112.

*Young and burdened with fruit, their heads bowed
with clusters*

*swelling to bursting, the tallest e'en as the lesser ;
And the day when avails the sin-spotted only
prayer for pardon and grace to lead him to mercy,
And the good deeds he wrought to witness before him
and the pity of Him who is Compassion :*

*Yea, a place in His shade, the best to abide in,
a heart still and steadfast, right-walking, honest.¹*

One or two other poets have been pointed to as showing more direct evidences of the impact of Jewish or Christian ideas upon the Arab mind—chief among them Samau'al, a Jewish poet of Taima, and Umāyya b. Abi aṣ-Ṣalt, a Medinan almost contemporary with Muhammad. In regard to both of them there are questions of genuineness regarding their poems which are not yet quite clear. But Umāyya at any rate is of some importance, for he seems independently to have made use of some of the ideas as to a future life which Muhammad pressed home in the Qur'ān.² The passages which have been quoted from such well-known and typical Arab poets as Zuhair and Labīd may, however, serve to show that a more spiritual view of life does sometimes appear in their poetry.

Had Christianity produced a deep impression upon Arabia, it would no doubt have burst through the convention which confined poetry to the subject and temper of the old desert life, or at least have produced a religious literature of its own. But it was left to Islam to bring

¹ C. J. Lyall, *op. cit.* p. 90, with notes, p. 92 f.

² On Umāyya see Schulthess in *Nöldeke Festschrift*, vol. i. p. 71 ff.

that impulse—if indeed Islam did convey it to the Arabs of the desert. If, however, remembering the strength of the convention under which the Arab poets composed, we bring together the objects connected with Christianity of which in poems of undisputed genuineness they show knowledge, it amounts to a good deal. Père Cheikho¹ has collected a great mass of material in this connection. He is rather uncritical. But he has, I think, brought together enough to show that the Aramaic language of Eastern Christianity had supplied the Arabs with a large number of religious terms. If we take only those which have long been recognised as derived from Aramaic and which belong to the ancient language we find that they show knowledge of Christian churches (*bī'a*, *kanīsa*); of images in the churches (*dumya*, *ṣūra*); of various grades of the hierarchy (*qasīs*, etc.); of Christian festivals, including the Easter festival. They could hardly have known about these things without some knowledge, external it may be, of the ideas which lay behind them. The monk, as I have said, especially impressed them, and while they borrowed Aramaic names for him they also used much more commonly the pure Arabic term *rāhib*. This comes from a root meaning “to fear”, and we may, I think, argue from that, that the Arabs did realise something of the motive behind the withdrawal of these men from the world and connected it with an intense fear of God. We have seen, too, that there are frequent references to

¹ *Le Christianisme et la littérature chrétienne en Arabie*, 2nde partie, Beyrouth, 1919.

the books of the monks, and the Arabs could not have witnessed Christian services without knowing that Christians cherished and founded their religion upon a revealed book, though they may not have had much knowledge of what that book contained. How important that was for the enterprise which Muhammad undertook we shall see in the next lecture.

We might also, I think, take as evidence of Aramaic, and Abyssinian, Christian influence in Arabia some of the words borrowed from these sources which Muhammad uses in the Qur'ān even when they cannot be shown with certainty to have been in use before his time. He may, of course, have directly adopted them. He had rather a liking for introducing unfamiliar words some of which he explains, others of which he leaves unexplained, a certain obscurity being appropriate to a divine revelation. But I incline to think that a good number of the words of foreign origin which he uses were not directly borrowed by him; that words like *ṣalāt* ("prayer" or rather "divine service"), *sabbih* ("ascribe glory to"), *tazakka* (in the sense of "to seek purity" with the connotation of doing so by giving alms), *abd* (in the sense of "a worshipper"), *qara'* (in the sense of "to read" or "recite solemnly"), and perhaps even *qur'ān* itself, were ready to his hand, and, if not quite commonly understood, were at least in use. When he challenges his opponents that if they do not accept the divine origin of his Qur'ān they should produce a *sūrah* like it,¹ he must have been using

¹ Surah, x. v. 39; xi. v. 16.

a word which they understood in the sense in which it was meant to be understood.¹ Again, it is unlikely that Muhammad turned to Ethiopic for a word to denote "angel". It is more likely that the word *mal'ak*, with its characteristically Ethiopic form of plural *malā'ika*, had already crept in from Abyssinia and was known to the people of Mecca. Grimme has cited a number of words in the Qur'ān which he regards as of South Arabian origin. With the exception of *rahmān*, which for a time Muhammad used as a name for God, and which I would rather regard as of Aramaic origin, none of these are of much religious importance. The investigation of the language of the South Arabian inscriptions is not as yet far enough advanced for us to found much upon it. But these words which I have mentioned as derived from Aramaic and Ethiopic—the list is by no means complete—show whence the language of religion came. The probability is that Muhammad found this language largely ready to his hand.

With the language must have come also some knowledge of the ideas. What was meant by a prophet, a holy book, revelation, prayer, and praise, cannot have been entirely unknown to the Arabs. A more thorough search of the old

¹ This word *surah*, which has come to be used to denote a section or chapter of the Qur'ān, is used in the Qur'ān itself in the sense of "writing" or "scripture". It is usually regarded as being derived from Hebrew *shūra*, meaning "a row" or "arrangement" (*vide* Nöldeke, *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft*, p. 26). But to my mind the word is Aramaic, being derived from the Syriac, *sūrṭā*, also found in the forms *ṣūrṭā* and *sūrtā*, which is used in the sense of "writing", and especially for "a portion of scripture" (*vide* Brockelmann and Payne-Smith, *s.vv.*).

poetry would probably disclose even to critical eyes, a wider range of religious ideas referred to as already known if not assimilated. Professor Horowitz, in a paper which I have not been able to procure, has, I understand, shown that nearly all the details of Muhammad's description of Paradise are to be found referred to by older and contemporary poets. If he has been able to prove that, it will add force to the contention that there was an atmosphere of Jewish and Christian ideas pervading Arabia at that time.

If from the ancient poetry of Arabia we cannot draw any conclusive evidence that these ideas had made any deep impression upon the Arab spirit, we can at least draw from it the negative conclusion that the old pagan religion had lost its hold. References to it are just as rare as to Christianity. Names of heathen deities occur in oaths and similar phrases. But even more commonly the name Allah is used. Making all allowance for the possibility that, as the poetry was not collected till the second century of Islam, the name Allah may sometimes have been substituted for that of some other deity, it is certain that Allah is frequently used as the name of God in pre-Islamic poetry. Wellhausen has remarked that, within his own territory, the king is sufficiently designated by his title, his proper name being unnecessary; and that the custom of thus referring to the tribal deity, combined with the wandering habits of the tribes, may have opened the way for the general idea of God, which is what Allah, if it be Arabic, denotes, and thus for the conception of one

supreme deity. That may be so, but I think that the influence of the monotheistic religions had also played its part in breaking up the polytheistic system. That the name Allah is borrowed I should not like to assert categorically. We sometimes find the proper Arabic form *al-'ilāh*, and *Allah* may have arisen by contraction. Still it is very like the Syriac term *Alāhā*, and that Christian form of the name and the Christian idea, penetrating along with it, had probably some influence upon the ideas of the Arabs and upon the form which their name for the supreme deity assumed.

In any case the fact is certain. Nowhere do we find any evidence of strong religious attachment to the old deities. The Badawi is not as a rule very susceptible to religious emotions. He is, on the other hand, very tenacious of established custom. In that sense the old religious practices survived. The sacred months, in which war was forbidden, were observed in a way which one would hardly have expected in so turbulent a country. The Arabs were shocked when Muhammad broke the peace of these sacred months which had been to them their period of security, in which they could travel in safety for business or for pleasure. The Pilgrimage brought annually a great concourse to Mecca. But it was as much business as religion that brought them, or perhaps more. Great markets were held in the neighbourhood of Mecca at the same time, notably that at Ukāz. It was a "holy fair", and the same may probably be said of the Pilgrimage as a whole. This we may surmise

brought considerable profit to Mecca; and in that (and also perhaps in the claim to personal authority which I think was implicit in Muhammad's claim to be recognised as a prophet from the first), we may suppose, lay the root of the stubborn opposition with which he was met, rather than in any real attachment to the old religion. In any case the Qur'ān itself bears out the fact that the old polytheism had no real hold as a religion, and that Allah was in a sense recognised as a supreme deity by the polytheists themselves. Muhammad's hesitation in adopting that name for the God whom he proclaimed—for considerable hesitation he does show—was probably due to that fact. In all the opposition to Muhammad we scarcely meet a defence of the old religion which can be called an argument in its favour. The Qur'ān is quite frank in recording the objections raised by opponents; but there is no reference to any defence of polytheism which could be said to rest on a conviction of its truth. There are arguments against Muhammad's own doctrines which he finds it necessary to combat—especially against his doctrine of the resurrection and future judgement. But in regard to their gods his opponents seem to have appealed simply to tradition. He was, they said, casting contempt upon the gods of their fathers. The one idea which he deals with, which perhaps implies a measure of real belief, is that of the intercession of the gods with Allah. The idea of intercession is one with which he himself played nearly all through the Qur'ān, rejecting it utterly as applied to the heathen gods

or as appertaining to any of right, but finally leaving the way open for its re-introduction by adding, to the statement that no intercession on man's behalf will be available on the judgement day, the proviso, "except that of those to whom God will give permission to intercede". Now, according to tradition—and the story is hardly likely to have been invented—Muhammad at one stage suggested that the heathen deities, al-Lāt, al-'Uzza, and al-Manāt might be recognised as entities whose intercession with Allah was to be hoped for; and it is said that the Meccans were content with the compromise. Whether this latter part of the tradition is true or not may be regarded as doubtful. But the Qur'ān itself seems to me to bear out the fact that the suggestion was made and afterwards withdrawn. We are not therefore quite sure whether this idea of intercession was in the minds of the heathen or whether in Muhammad's own mind some echo of the Christian idea of the intercession of the saints was working, and that the suggestion came to him—from Satan, as he afterwards said—that this might apply also to the heathen gods. But it is inherently probable that the heathen themselves had some such idea of the relation of their special gods to a supreme deity. Indeed other passages of the Qur'ān make it clear that they had.

That they really had the idea of a supreme deity the Qur'ān also testifies. It is taken for granted there that they will admit that Allah is the creator of the world. What they deny is not that but, what the prophet insists is implicit in that, namely, that the world has been created

for moral ends and that a judgement must follow upon human life. More than once the unbelievers are taunted in the Qur'ān that when in distress they pray to God, but when they are relieved they turn to idolatry again. "*When harm befalleth a man he calleth upon his Lord and turneth unto him; but afterwards when God hath bestowed on him favour from himself, he forgetteth that being which he invoked before and setteth up equals unto God*" (Sur. xxxix. v. 11; cf. v. 50). In another passage they are taunted that when they are at sea they pray to Allah, but when they reach land in safety they turn again to their idols. It seems clear that the Arabs had the idea of a supreme God, in a sense superior to their local deities, but only turned to in their times of stress.

In this state of matters—the break-up of the traditional religion and the creeping in of a dim unmoralised idea of a superior deity—we may assume that where the pressure of life was in a measure relieved, and thought had opportunity to awaken, indications would arise of a search for a more satisfying faith. Some memory of the existence of such a movement in Arabia, and particularly in the neighbourhood of Mecca at and before Muhammad's time, is probably preserved in the Moslem traditions as to the Ḥanīfs who were more or less associated with the Prophet. The term Ḥanīf is applied by tradition to some half-dozen persons, amongst whom are—

Waraqā b. Naufal, who is said to have been a cousin of Khadija the Prophet's wife, and to have been a Christian;

Ubaid Allah b. Jaḥsh, who separated himself from idolatry, but adopted no other faith until he became a Moslem, then emigrated with other Moslems to Abyssinia in the days of persecution in Mecca; became there a Christian, and died as such;

Zaid b. 'Amr b. Nufail, who remained a seeker until his death; and

Uthmān b. Huwairith, who emigrated to Roman territory and became a Christian.

Modern scholars are disposed to question these traditions, and probably in their details they cannot be accepted. The meaning of the term is also in dispute. It has usually been regarded as derived from the Syriac *ḥanpa* = "heathen", and it is suggested that it may have been applied as a hostile epithet to those who rejected the old heathen gods. *Ḥanīf* is, however, not linguistically the equivalent of *ḥanpa*, but is a proper Arabic form. It is therefore simpler, and comes to much the same thing, if we regard it as derived from the Arabic root *ḥanaf*, which means to decline or turn away from. *Ḥanīf* would then mean one who turns aside or secedes from his community in the matter of religion.¹ Now Muhammad uses the word in the Qur'ān. That may have given rise, as has been suggested, to the whole tradition about the *Ḥanīfs*; but I think his use of it implies that the term was in use, and in use to denote a class of religious men who were known and respected. He declares Abraham to have been a *Ḥanīf* and also a Moslem.

¹ Vide F. Schulthess, *Nöldeke Festschrift*, i. p. 86.

Muhammad gives his own sense to the word, as we shall see; but his use of it seems to imply that there was such a class of men, and that the religion which they sought was not so far removed from Islam but that he could represent it as the fulfilment of their aspirations. By *ḥanīf* he means one who follows the original natural religion which God has implanted in the heart of man from the first. It does not seem the term he would have invented to express that. He must, I think, have adopted it because he found it in use, applied to a class of men who, turning away from idolatry, cherished some such idea of what the true religion was.

As a further indication that Muhammad did not stand quite alone and was not the only individual upon whom Jewish and Christian ideas exerted an impulse towards Prophetism, we may cite also the fact of the appearance of other prophets in Arabia. To mention the Elkasaites in this connection is perhaps to jump back over too long a period of time. But to judge by his name, their founder Elkasai was an Arab and may illustrate the effect of mingled Jewish and Christian ideas upon the Arab mind. His activity fell in the time of Trajan. He was the revealer of a book which was held by his followers to have come down from heaven. There were also other points of similarity between the religion of the Elkasaites and that of the Prophet of Arabia. They believed in one God and in the Last Judgement. In prayer they turned towards Jerusalem, as Muhammad at one stage did, though probably in his case it was due to direct

Jewish influence. What is said to have been the secret watchword of Elkasai,¹ "I am a witness over you on the day of judgement", is found almost in so many words in the Qur'ān. Moreover, there is mention in the Qur'ān of a class of "People of the Book" designated the Ṣābi'in. It is a name which has given rise to much discussion. I am personally inclined to take it as simply a reference to the Sabæans; *i.e.* to the South Arabian Christians as distinguished from the Christians of the north denoted by Naṣāra. But there are two things which stand in the way of that simple interpretation. It involves a confusion of *s*-sounds which are quite distinct in Arabic. There is evidence too that the Meccans applied the name Ṣābi'in to Muhammad and his followers in the early days of the Prophet's activity.² If that evidence be reliable, it seems to imply that there was a sect known to the Meccans of whose washings or baptizings they were reminded by the ritual practices introduced by Muhammad. In that case it is simplest to suppose that the Ṣābi'in were some remnant of the Elkasaites who had maintained themselves in the north-west of Arabia, where they would be known to the Meccans, and may even have exercised some influence upon Muhammad. For that by Ṣābi'in in the Qur'ān, Muhammad meant to indicate the Mandæans, or some still more obscure sect dwelling in Mesopotamia, seems to me very improbable. These matters are, how-

¹ *Vide* Brandt, article "Elkasaites" in *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*.

² Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 2nd ed., p. 236 f.

ever, obscure, and all that we can say is that the Elkasaites were a similar phenomenon to Islam arising at an earlier period as a result of Jewish and Christian influences penetrating into Arabia.

The other prophets mentioned as appearing in Arabia are all slightly later than Muhammad himself. A rival named Aswad caused some stir in Yaman towards the end of his life. Immediately after his death opposition to the new Moslem state arose all over Arabia, but especially in the north-east, where we find it centring round various persons of a prophetic character. It is to be noted that, like Aswad in Yaman, all these appeared in districts where the influence of Christianity had been felt. Tulaiha found his followers among the Bani Asad, the prophetess Sajah found hers among the Tamim, Musailima his among the Hanīfa, all more or less Christian tribes. Moslem tradition represents them as false prophets, imitators of the prophet of Medina, and no doubt the success of prophecy in Medina was responsible for its simultaneous appearance in so many different districts. But Moslem tradition has evidently not been kind to these rivals, and even as it is Musailima, of whom it tells us most, shows some independence of Muhammad and fairly clear traces of Christian ideas. Apart from that, their appearance and the following they were able to gather show that there was an atmosphere of religious thought out of which a prophet of a monotheistic faith might readily spring.

The best proof of that lies in the appearance of Muhammad himself. For in seeking to explain

the beginnings, at least, of his religious activity we have to do, not with outside influences so much as with certain great ideas which lay already in the minds of his contemporaries, but which he laid hold of, or which laid hold of him, more intensely. What distinguished him was not so much the originality of his ideas as the intensity of his conviction. He is not the originator of monotheism in Arabia. In a sense he is not even the preacher of monotheism. For with him that there is only one God is an axiom rather than a truth to be argued for. Nor can we trace in the Qur'ān any struggle by which he passed from paganism to a new faith, though we can discern some of the things which had specially impressed his mind as evidences of God's Being and Power. He brooded over religious problems all his life. We see him adjusting his ideas on several points almost to the end. But—except in the one particular of the possible recognition of the heathen deities as intercessors with God—from the doctrine of the one God, His power over men, and the moral requirements of His service, he never varied by a hair's-breadth. He was a religious genius, yet not one of the intuitive strikingly original sort. His political genius impresses me even more. It enabled him to carry his cause ultimately to wonderful success. In his policy he could be accommodating, and on occasion unscrupulous. It is impossible to acquit him of the charge of having sometimes allowed his personal desires and even his passions to influence it in details. But in essentials his policy was dictated by intense personal convic-

tion. He is the man of practical instinct upon whom religious beliefs have laid a strong and lasting grip, in whom the intensity of his own belief combines with the perception of a need which others are only half-conscious of, to produce an imperative sense of duty; who is not over-scrupulous in details, but who presses forward always to the accomplishment of his main task.

LECTURE III

THE BEGINNINGS OF MUHAMMAD'S RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY

WE turn now to Muhammad and the origin of Islam. It will not be necessary to go into any detail here with regard to the outward facts of the life of Muhammad. There are good biographies in English to which reference may be made.¹ It will be sufficient for our present purpose to recall that he was born about A.D. 570. About the year A.D. 612, when he was therefore a little over forty years of age, he began to work as a prophet in his native town of Mecca. After some ten years of comparatively unsuccessful effort there, during which time he and the few followers he had succeeded in gathering were subjected to continual annoyance and even persecution, he removed to Medina in the year A.D. 622. (This is the Hijra, the beginning of the Moslem era.) From that town he soon began to send out raiding parties to attack the Meccan caravans. This led in the month of Ramadān

¹ Sir William Muir, *Life of Mahomet*, 4 vols., London, 1861; abridged in one vol., 1878; revised and re-edited by T. H. Weir, 1912. P. de Lacy Johnstone, *Muhammad and his Power* (World's Epoch-Makers' Series), Edinburgh, 1901. D. S. Margoliouth, *Mohammed* (Heroes of the Nations Series), London, 1905.

of the second year of the Hijra to the battle of Badr, in which Muhammad with a little over 300 followers gained a victory over 900 Meccans. At his first coming to Medina he had made advances to the Jews there, but had found little acceptance. He now turned against them. One after another their tribes were expelled; the last was cruelly put to the sword. The Quraish of Mecca made various attempts to check the growing power of their emigrated kinsman, but though they gained one considerable success at the battle of Uḥud, they never succeeded in wiping out the effect of the victory at Badr. Their opposition was gradually undermined, and in the year 8 of the Hijra, Muhammad gained possession of Mecca almost without a struggle. The Meccan sanctuary, the Ka'ba, was cleansed from idolatry, and soon the ceremonies of the Pilgrimage were incorporated into Islam. Muhammad's power had by this time extended almost all over Arabia. An expedition northwards in the year 8 came into conflict with Roman troops at Muta and suffered defeat. Next year the Prophet in person led an expedition to Tabūk, which had no great result. A third expedition, meant for the Syrian frontier, was gathering at Medina when Muhammad died. This was in the year A.D. 632, less than ten years after his leaving Mecca. His prophecies were collected a year or two after his death, and form the Qur'ān. The final redaction of it was made in the caliphate of Uthman, about twenty years after Muhammad's death.

When we inquire as to the development of

Muhammad's ideas and the influences which affected him we meet with two great difficulties. The first is that the traditions as to his early life are so unreliable as to be practically of no use for the purpose. It is unsafe to found anything upon them unless it is confirmed by the Qur'ān itself. The second is that the Qur'ān is in confusion. In spite of the fact that it was collected so soon after Muhammad's death, it is almost impossible to arrange it in chronological order. Nöldeke in his *Geschichte des Qorans* grouped the surahs of which it consists according to periods, and his arrangement of them has been generally accepted as the best that can be reached. He however did not profess to arrange the surahs within each group, especially those which form the earliest group, in order of time. Further, I think Nöldeke did not allow sufficiently for the fact that even quite short surahs are sometimes composite. It can, I think, be shown that Muhammad himself revised and added to his early deliverances at some later stage. The fact that a passage contains a late phrase or two need not always imply that the whole passage is late. This is not, however, the place to discuss the chronological arrangement of the surahs of the Qur'ān. What I have to say will not I hope depend upon any arbitrary arrangement, though now and then I have ventured to form opinions of my own in that matter, as the absence of any assured order of the early passages seemed to allow.

To any student of the Qur'ān the presence in it of Jewish and Christian elements is evident

almost at the first glance. But it is by no means easy to determine what elements came through Jewish channels and what through Christian. Scholars are apt to stress the influence of each according to their own predilections. Some (as for instance Hirschfeld) seem to regard Muhammad as having been from the start directly under the influence of Judaism or of the Old Testament. Sprenger made much of his reported meetings with Christian monks. But the traditions with regard to these are very untrustworthy. More modern Christian scholars have been inclined to see in some contact with Christianity the impulse which first led him to become a prophet.

It is, however, an error to attribute to Muhammad a too direct acquaintance with Christianity or Judaism or with the Bible at the outset of his career. We do find all sorts of reminiscences of Biblical phrases even in the earliest portions of the Qur'ān, but of any intimate knowledge of either of these two religions or of the Bible itself, there is no convincing evidence. Passages and phrases which have been adduced as implying knowledge of Christianity do not stand examination. The short early Surah cxii. : "*Say, God is one God, the Eternal God ; He begetteth not neither is He begotten ; and there is not any one like unto Him*", is sometimes quoted as if it were an early rejection of one of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity. But apart from the question as to whether the passage really belongs to the very earliest period, the original reference in it is not to the Christian doctrine of the Divine Sonship, but to the pagan Arab idea of the special deities

as the daughters of Allah. So also in Surah lxxxv. vv. 1-9 :

*By the heaven with its constellations,
By the day appointed,
By witness and what is witnessed,
Cursed be those of the Trench
Of the Fire and its Fuel,
Think of them sitting by it
Witnesses of what they did with the Believers ;*

where in all probability the persecution of the Christians of Najrān is referred to, he is not taking sides with the Christians and condemning the Jews, who are sometimes blamed for the persecution. He is using an Arab legend which has grown out of that event of nearly a century previous to point a moral and condemn the persecutors of his own followers at Mecca. Again, on the ground of a phrase which occurs several times in the Qur'ān in connection with Jesus, that "*two parties differed regarding him*", knowledge of different sects of Christians is sometimes attributed to him. But that phrase when it is studied is found to grow out of Muhammad's conception of the origin of Polytheism, and when it comes to be associated with Jesus the reference is to the difference between Jews and Christians, the existence of which he does not seem to have realised until his prophetic career was almost half run. That of course implies that he had as little direct and intimate knowledge of Judaism as of Christianity. The key to a great deal both in the Qur'ān and in the career of Muhammad lies, as I hope to show, just in his gradual acquisi-

tion of knowledge of what the Bible contained and of what Jews and Christians believed.

We have, in fact, to allow for considerable originality in Muhammad, not the originality which produces something absolutely new, but the originality of a strong mind, working upon very imperfect information of outside things, yet finding expression for ideas and aspirations which were dimly present in other minds. He claimed to be an Arab prophet and he was. We shall see him consciously borrowing—he is quite frank about it. But to begin with, the materials which he uses, though they may remind us ever and again of Jewish and Christian phrases and ideas, are in reality Arab materials. They may have been originally derived from outside Arabia, but they had by Muhammad's time become part of the Arab mind. To ask whether Judaism or Christianity had most to do with the formation of Muhammad's fundamental ideas is really to ask the question which of the two religions had most influence upon Arabia itself. As regards Christianity, his own direct knowledge of it was to begin with, I believe, just such knowledge as we might expect in a caravan trader who had been to Syria and seen Christian churches, and perhaps Christian services.

Nor, it seems to me, need we seek for any sect of believers in the near approach of the Day of Judgement, in some contact with whom might be found the impulse which caused Muhammad's appearance as a prophet. Too exclusive attention has of late been paid to his proclamation of the approaching judgement. The pre-

sently prevailing view is that Muhammad had somehow become impressed with the nearness of the end of the world ; that by strange psychological experiences, consequent upon the excitement which that idea produced in his own mind, he was imbued with the notion that he was called to warn his own people of the approaching calamity ; that he began with the purest motives to proclaim the approach of the Judgement Day ; that the delay of its appearance forced him gradually to modify his visionary presentation of the doctrine ; that after some ten years of unselfish and unrewarded labour in Mecca he migrated to Medina to escape the persecution of his fellow-townsmen and find a more hopeful field for his message ; that coming to Medina at an opportune time he soon found himself at the head of a community, and succumbing to the temptations of power became more and more a worldly prince and an unscrupulous ruler. In such an account of Muhammad I am convinced that the emphasis is wrong. It is not to be denied that he was impressed by the idea of the Judgement Day, or that he proclaimed the truth of it with fire and conviction. But study of the early portions of the Qur'ān has led me to the conclusion that he had much more practical purposes in his mind at the start than the proclamation of the approaching end of the world, and that the preacher of Mecca was much more like the prophet of Medina than the view of him which I have sketched represents.

We have always to be on our guard against attaching too much weight to the traditions of

the Prophet's early life. If we apply to the legends which surround his Call to the prophetic office the rule that they can only be accepted seriously so far as they are confirmed by the Qur'ān itself, we shall find very little in them that ought to be allowed to influence our ideas of the beginnings of Muhammad's work. Even if we accept the stories of his fasts and lonely vigils in the cave on Mt. Hira, we are probably reading our own ideas into them if we assume that it was the idea of the approaching end of the world that was working in his mind. At the comparatively mature age which he had reached it was at least as likely to be doubts and hesitations regarding the adoption of a hazardous and difficult enterprise which were troubling him. It was to the adoption of this practical enterprise that the Angel finally compelled him, and the passage of the Qur'ān, which tradition says was first delivered at the direct command of Gabriel (the beginning of Surah xcvi.), is not an announcement of the end of the world being at hand, but a command to "read" in the name of God the Creator and generous bestower of good upon man.

Muhammad was a visionary, no doubt, but he was not a crack-brained enthusiast. He was a very practical character. In Medina that side of his character is almost painfully evident. But those who migrate change their dwelling not their nature. Even in Mecca the practical direction of his thought is very marked. He had the mystic quality of a seeker after truth, but that did not destroy his practical bent; it only gave it a

religious direction. His enterprise was, in my opinion, from the very start quite a rational and practical one, though as it turned out not immediately practicable. It is acknowledged that it was a local enterprise directed upon Mecca and upon Mecca alone. The evidence for that runs through half the Qur'ān. His idea was that a prophet is "sent" to his own people, to his own *qurya* or town as he sometimes expresses it. (We shall see later at what stage he modified that idea.) In his stories of former prophets, in which every one recognises that his own experience in Mecca forms always the background, the prophet is always represented as coming to his people, not with a message of immediate judgement, but with an appeal to recognise and worship the true God and to show thankfulness for His bounties. It is when that appeal is rejected that the threat of judgement and punishment to come is delivered. That corresponds, I think, to what happened in Mecca. Study of the early portions of the Qur'ān leads to the same conclusion.

Among the short surahs at the end of the Qur'ān there is a curious fragment which perhaps throws light on the nature of this first enterprise ; Surah cvi. :

*For the bringing together by the Quraish,
For their bringing together the winter and the summer
caravan
Let them serve the Lord of this House,
Who has given them provision against famine, and
made them secure against fear.*

It is the only passage in which the Quraish (the

tribe which inhabited Mecca) are mentioned by name; at a later stage they are frequently referred to by the phrase *alladhīna kafarū*, those who have disbelieved. Unlike the rest of the Qur'ān the passage has no rhyme, and it is rather more prosaic in style than the earliest portions of it. But it cannot very well be late, because at no time after the early years of his mission would Muhammad have referred to the trade of the Quraish and their organisation of the caravans as a ground of thankfulness to God; except, perhaps, at the very end after the conquest of Mecca. By that time, however, his phraseology was stereotyped, and he would almost certainly have said, "Let them serve (worship) Allah", not "Let them serve the Lord of this House". Nowhere else does he refer to God in that way.¹ One cannot be dogmatic on such a point, and the passage may be very late instead of very early, but I should like to regard it as an early formulation of his own enterprise. It was to be a revival, perhaps a purification in the direction of Monotheism, of religion in Mecca, with the Ka'ba as the centre of it. The appeal was to be to the sense of gratitude to God for His bounties. That is quite in line with the whole career of the man who set out to be an Arab prophet, who, in spite of his experience of persecution by and his hostility to the Meccans at one period of his life, so loved his native town that the people of

¹ We may compare Surah xxvii. v. 93: "*I have been commanded only that I should worship the Lord of this land who has made it sacred and to whom belongs everything; and I have been commanded that I should be one of those who surrender themselves*" (i.e. Moslems). The reference here is evidently to the Haram of Mecca.

Medina feared that after the conquest of it he would transfer his residence thither again, and who at the very end incorporated the Ka'ba with its Black Stone, and the Pilgrimage—an extraneous chunk of heathenism—into the religion he had founded. In fact, the Ka'ba played a more important part in Muhammad's thoughts all through than is generally recognised.

The same motive seems to lie behind another passage which is certainly early, though its first phrase is a somewhat stereotyped introduction; Surah cv. :

*Hast thou not considered how thy Lord did with
them of the elephant?
Did He not put their scheme awry?
He sent upon them birds in flocks¹
Which pelted them with stones of sijjil.²
Thus He made them like green shoots eaten down.*

The reference is to the deliverance of Mecca from Abraha's expedition. It is unlikely that Muhammad invented the miraculous elements of the story. The legend may quite well have developed in the forty years which had elapsed. He uses it to advance the claims to worship of the Lord of the Ka'ba, who had so wonderfully vindicated his power to preserve His temple and territory.

There is abundant evidence in the Qur'ān to show how fundamental in Muhammad's mind was the idea of gratitude to God. The common word

¹ "abābil" : The meaning of the word is uncertain.

² "Sijjil", from Greek *sigillon*; perhaps the idea may be "pieces of baked clay" (with the name of the victim stamped on them?).

for unbeliever is *kāfir*, which really means an ungrateful, unthankful person. The believer is either *mu'min*, "one who puts his trust in" God, or *muslim*, "one who surrenders to, or makes peace with" God. In this latter, and in the name he gave to his religion, *Islām*, which is the verbal noun from the same root, we see the prominence of the idea of power. To Muhammad the manifestations of God's goodness were principally manifestations of His creative power. In Surah lxxix. vv. 27-33 he asks :

*Are ye more difficult to create, or the heaven? He
built it,
Lifted up its vault and poised it,
Made dark its night and brought forth its dawn ;
The earth thereafter He spread out,
Brought forth from it its water and its pasture ;
The mountains He set firm,
A provision for you and your flocks.*

This last verse is out of rhyme, and does not come quite appropriately after the reference to the mountains. It occurs again, though again out of rhyme, in Surah lxxx. vv. 24-32 :

*Let man consider his food.
Verily We have poured down water in showers,
And have broken up the ground in rents,
And have caused grain to sprout up in it,
And grapes and herbs
And olives and palms
And gardens thickly planted
And fruits and pastures,
A provision for you and your flocks.*

Such enumerations of God's bounties in Creation are frequent in the Qur'ān. We may take one more example from Surah lxxviii. vv. 6-16 :

Have we not made the earth a wide expanse

And the mountains as pillars ?

We have created you in pairs.

We have appointed your sleep for rest.

We have appointed the night for a covering.

We have appointed the day for a livelihood.

We have built above you seven firmaments.

We have set a light burning.

*We have sent down from the storm-clouds water in
torrents,*

*Thereby to cause to spring up grain and vegeta-
tion*

And gardens luxuriant.

Alongside these evidences of God's power and bounty in inanimate Nature there appears another proof to which Muhammad frequently returns. That is the generation of life, and especially the life of man. In some passages he describes the process of the formation of the embryo in the womb with a detail which implies considerable knowledge. The wonder of it had evidently made a deep impression upon his mind as in fact it did upon the Arab mind in general. This is of interest to us here because it is another mark of Muhammad's independence of direct Biblical influence, at the outset of his career. In Surah xcvi., which is so generally regarded as the earliest passage of the Qur'ān, God is spoken of as the Creator who has created man. But it is not the Biblical account of the Creation which

is there referred to. For God is said to have created man from *'alaq*, and when we compare other passages it becomes clear that *'alaq* denotes the first stage in the formation of the embryo in the womb. At a later period, when Muhammad had got to know something of the Old Testament, he refers, as we might expect, to the creation of man from clay. But in the earliest passages that does not occur. It is the wonder of the process by which the human body and soul is formed afresh in each infant that comes to the birth, which has impressed him, and which is used as a proof of God's bountiful power. For it is as a proof of God's goodness that the idea seems to have affected Muhammad himself, and to have been first used by him. But very soon, when he encountered opposition, it became a cogent argument for God's power over man in respect of judgement and punishment; and when the scoffers ask how dust and mouldering bones can be punished, the reply is that if God has power to call man to life the first time from a drop of water, He can as easily call him to life a second time to receive the reward of his deeds.

It is upon reliance on the goodness of God that Muhammad falls back amid the discouragements of his task. There are various little fragments among the short surahs at the end of the Qur'ān which appear to be of the nature of self-encouragements, and base themselves upon the recollection of God's bounty and goodwill towards himself personally. Thus in Surah xciv. we find the following apparently addressed to himself :

*Have We not opened thy mind,
 Removed the burden
 Which broke thy back,
 And raised thy reputation?
 Surely ease accompanies hardness
 Surely ease accompanies hardness
 So when thou art free labour
 And to thy Lord make supplication.*

If we were to translate the repeated verse, "Surely in the hardest days there is leisure", we should probably not be far from the sense, and we might have a picture of Muhammad, perhaps before he became definitely a prophet, labouring while still daily engaged in business, to bring the reality of devotion into the religion of the Quraish and the Ka'ba.

Again in Surah xciii. he seems to be experiencing the difficulty of his enterprise and encouraging himself :

*By the early day,
 By the night when it is dark,
 Thy Lord has not left thee nor despised thee.
 Verily the end will be better for thee than the
 beginning.*

*Thy Lord will give thee thy satisfaction.
 Did He not find thee an orphan and give thee shelter,
 Find thee erring and lead thee,
 Find thee poor and give thee riches ?*

to which he adds, perhaps at some later stage, when he made use of this publicly :

*As for the orphan then be not overbearing ;
 As for the beggar scold him not ;
 As for the grace of thy Lord make it known.*

Whence this idea of the bounteous Creator came to Muhammad we cannot say. In the background of men's minds it is common the world over and has long been so. It was the common property of Judaism and Christianity. Whether any contact with either of these religions had helped to make it real in his mind we cannot be sure. All we can say is that both these religions had helped to form the atmosphere of thought in which any Arab of intelligence, who was dissatisfied with the pagan idolatry, would find himself. What distinguished Muhammad among his countrymen was that he took the idea with absolute seriousness and made it the ground of an appeal to his people to show thankfulness to the One God, the creator of all things. This appeal runs through the Qur'ān from its earliest to its latest passages. All things come from God ; man himself is God's creature. All that he is and all that he has, his children and his wealth, come from God. It is man's duty therefore to worship his Creator, and to be generous with what God has given him.

It is probable that from the first the religious reform which he aimed at included social and moral reform. Not only worship of the true God, but almsgiving and beneficence as well were included in the duty of thankfulness. Grimme¹ indeed regarded the social side of Muhammad's mission as even more fundamental than the religious, and treated his social programme as virtually complete when he began his work. In particular, he regarded the word

¹ Hubert Grimme, *Mohammed* ; Muenster, 1892-95.

tazakka, which occurs frequently in early passages of the Qur'ān, as meaning even in these passages "to pay the *zakāt*" or fixed contribution for the support of the poor of the community, which became one of the institutions of Islam. That would imply that Muhammad at the very beginning of his mission advocated a ready thought-out scheme for the relief of the poor. Snouck Hurgronje,¹ however, conclusively showed that this interpretation of Muhammad as a kind of Socialist could not be upheld. A definite tradition assigns the introduction of the *zakāt* as a prescribed religious tax to the second year of the Hijra, and there is no good reason for questioning the truth of that tradition. The word *tazakka*, the root meaning of which is "to purify oneself", has in early passages still something of that original sense about it, but the acquired connotation of almsgiving is even more prominent. The religious merit of giving to the poor is an idea common to the East, and both Judaism and Christianity had given that modification to the corresponding root in Hebrew and Aramaic. In using that and similar terms in the early parts of the Qur'ān, Muhammad is not so much advocating a social programme for the relief of the poor as demanding generosity as part of man's religious duty, and recommending almsgiving as a means of setting the soul right with God.

Still, it is evident that the social wrongs which appeared in a hard-bitten trading community like that of the Quraish of Mecca had made an impression upon Muhammad's mind. By all

¹ *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, for the year 1894.

accounts he himself had felt the pinch of poverty in his youth. The natural meaning of a passage above quoted (Surah xciii.) is that he had been an orphan child, though it has been suggested that its meaning is metaphorical. Tradition at any rate has taken it in its literal sense and confirmed it by circumstantial details which can hardly be altogether devout imagination. But whether that be so or not, there are fairly early passages which show that he had a keen perception of social abuses and had the rights of the poor and the unfortunate upon his heart. To give a share of their wealth to the suppliant and the outcast is among the characteristics of the good (Surah li. v. 19). More specifically we have the orphan and the beggar recommended for considerate treatment in a passage already quoted (Surah xciii. vv. 9-10). Again in Surah xc. vv. 11 ff. we have the "Path" which is set before men, but from which they turn away, described as

*Giving freedom to a bondman,
Feeding in the day of famine
An orphan who is near (of kin)
Or a poor man whose lot is miserable.*

Surah lxxxix. vv. 18-21 declares of the Meccans :

*Ye honour not the orphan
Ye urge not (one another) to feed the poor,
Ye devour heritages greedily,
And ye love riches exceedingly.*

The use of false balances is perhaps referred to in Surah ci., but the sense is disputed, and the

passage may have an eschatological reference. But in Surah lv. v. 8 we have the command :

Weigh therefore with fairness and scant not the balance,

and again in Surah lxxxiii. vv. 1 ff, the giving of stinted measure is condemned :

*Woe to those who stint the measure,
Who when they take by measure from others exact
the full,
But when they mete to them or weigh to them,
minish.¹*

In an early Surah (lxxxv. vv. 8, 9) we find included in a description of the Last Day, a reference to female infanticide :

*When the buried child shall be asked
For what sin she was put to death.*

But I think that is a later insertion suggested by conditions in Desert Arabia rather than by those of Mecca.

There is a Biblical ring about some of these passages, and the collocation of the poor, the orphan, and the prisoner has a familiar sound to a reader of the Bible. Yet there is nothing so close to the Bible as to suggest direct borrowing. One cannot avoid the impression that Muhammad had felt independently the abuses, injustices, and cruelties which prevailed, though his conscience was no doubt formed by that Jewish Christian atmosphere which had penetrated Arabia. In that perception of social abuses we may see one

¹ Rodwell's translation.

of the motive impulses which inspired him to his mission. It is in line with the prophetic tradition that it should have been so.

The passages in which specific abuses are attacked are, however, not to my mind the earliest. The quickening of the religious interest was the first thing in his mind. That to him included generosity and almsgiving. It was when he found an obstacle to this in the worldly temper of the wealthy Quraish that he began to denounce the rich and to point out the specific injustices and inhumanities of which they were guilty. Perhaps as Casanova has suggested there may have been some influence of Christianity in his denunciation of the wealthy and their pride of riches. That is at least more probable than that the influence should have come from the side of Judaism. For the Jews of Arabia were probably as wealthy and as immersed in the pursuit of gain as the Quraish. But if there is any outside influence in the matter, it found support in his own personal experience of the wealthy amongst the Quraish. He sought to move them, found them unsympathetic, even hostile, and so turned from them. But this was a gradual process. The change of attitude is perhaps marked by a passage of which tradition has made a good deal, in which the Prophet is taken to task for having treated with scant courtesy a blind man who interrupted him in a conversation with a wealthy citizen. Whether it is the Prophet himself who is apostrophised is not quite so clear as tradition represents it. But at any rate the passage does indicate a recognition that he or some of his

followers were paying too much attention to the wealthy and too little to humble inquirers :

*He frowned and turned away
Because the blind man came to him.
How knowest thou? Perhaps he was seeking
purity (tazakka)
Or would so listen to the warning that the warning
would profit him
As for him who is niggardly,
Thou didst humbly coax him,
Though it is not thy concern that he does not seek
purity.
But as for him who comes to thee eagerly
Though in fear,
Thou makest light of him. (Surah lxxx. vv. 1-10.)*

There are other passages which suggest that Muhammad passed gradually over to the threat of future punishment upon the wealthy. He at first simply turned away from them. "Leave me with . . ." the evildoer or unbeliever—spoken in the name of God—is a frequent injunction implying that God will deal with him and that Muhammad has nothing more to do with the matter. "He is only a warner", and having given the warning his responsibility is at an end.

At first the warning is quite vague and general, as in lxxiv. vv. 11 ff. :

*Leave me with him whom I have created apart,
To whom I have given large possessions,
And sons to dwell before him,
For whom I have made everything smooth,*

Who then desires that I should increase (his wealth)

*I shall lay difficult things upon him.*¹

Or as in xcii. vv. 1-11 :

*By the night when it comes down
By the day when it shines forth,
By what created male and female,
Verily your courses are different.
As for him who gives and is pious
And believes in the Good,
We shall assist him to ease.
But as for him who is niggardly and avaricious
And disbelieves in the Good,
We shall assist him to distress.
His wealth will not profit him when he perisheth.*

There is in such passages none of the lurid detail with which, as is well known, his portrayals of the coming Judgement were ultimately decked out. With the development of his ideas of the Judgement we shall have to deal later. Here it is sufficient to point out that his earliest threats of punishment have no reference to the end of the world. They amount to little more than the quite general statement that he who rejects the appeal will somehow suffer for doing so. The prominence which the proclamation of judgement assumes is the result of opposition.

We may also note before leaving this subject meantime, that along with the development of

¹ These verses I take to be earlier than what follows because the use of the singular "I" where God is represented as speaking shows that Muhammad has not quite settled down to his prophetic style.

his pictures of the punishment of the wicked there comes also a generalisation of the indictment of their offence. The steps here seem to be that first of all he denounces the worldly temper, as in the passage just quoted, where the niggardly and avaricious man is contrasted with him who gives and is pious. Next, some specific abuses are cited by way of illustration of the hardness of heart of the wealthy. Then, as their opposition continues he comes to regard their rejection of his message as the test of the worldly temper. We see him justifying this in Surah cvii. vv. 1-3 :

*Seest thou not him who disbelieves in the Judgement ;
He it is who repels the orphan,
And does not encourage the feeding of the poor.*

The sin of Unbelief thus includes all others, and therefore is the one which, for the most of the Meccan period, is almost exclusively denounced. Muhammad becomes the preacher of imminent punishment and Judgement upon those who have shown themselves unthankful, *i.e.* have rejected his first appeal and refused to believe.

The question then arises : Did Muhammad adopt the idea of the coming Judgement merely from the desire to frighten the Meccans into acceptance of his religious reform, or was it one of his fundamental convictions from the first ? According to Sprenger¹ " Muhammad clearly understood that these terrifying bogeys are the best means to procure from men acceptance of beliefs ". That is, however, a rather rough and

¹ A. Sprenger, *Das Leben u. die Lehre des Muhammads*, vol. i. p. 504.

ready judgement. That motives of that kind influenced him to some extent is not to be denied, though there was less conscious insincerity in the matter than we might imagine. The business man turned religious is often not meticulously scrupulous as to methods. That does not mean that he is insincere or dishonest, but only that the practical instinct to get things done, does not allow scruples as to methods overmuch weight. Nor have we any reason to suppose that Muhammad did not himself thoroughly believe in the pictures of the coming Judgement by which he sought to impress the Meccans. For one thing, his descriptions of the Judgement and the punishments of the future did not procure from the Meccans acceptance of his religion. On the contrary, the doctrine of the Resurrection which was necessarily involved, became the object of their worst ridicule. Yet he never drops the idea of the Divine Judgement upon man's conduct. We shall find that his conceptions of how the Judgement and punishment come, are not always the same, but the fact itself remains clear and distinct throughout the Qur'ān from start to finish. Even if, as I have said, the appeal to gratitude to God for His bounties was prominent to begin with, some notion of the Divine wrath lurks in the background. For the almsgiving and generosity which he demanded are as much motivated by the desire of standing well with God as by humanity. That is implied in the use of the word *tazakka*, of which I have already spoken. There is a passage which belongs to the very earliest portions of the Qur'ān which shows the

fear of the Divine wrath in Muhammad's own mind ; lxxiv. vv. 1-7 :

O thou clothed in the dithār
Rise and warn,
Magnify thy Lord,
Cleanse thy garments,
Flee the Abomination (or the Wrath),
Bestow not favours in hope of gain,
And wait patiently for thy Lord.

That has always been taken as an exhortation to the Prophet himself. The word *mudaththar* is of uncertain meaning, but the most probable sense is, "one clothed in the *dithār*", some special garment worn by a worshipper. Were there any other evidence of such a thing one would be tempted to see in the passage a kind of rule of life for a monkish company of worshippers. But in any case the passage is a programme for himself at least, and has nothing to do with denunciation of the Quraish. "Warning" is already part of his duty. More interesting still is the word usually translated "the Abomination". The exact word, *rugz*, does not occur again in the Qur'ān. But the related word *rigz* occurs some eight or nine times, always with the sense of punishment or calamity. *Rugz* is therefore explained by the Moslem commentators as "conduct which leads to calamity or punishment" and hence "idolatry". But that is evidently a guess at the meaning of a word which in its actual form was not familiar to them. Now in Syriac we find the word *rugza* meaning "wrath". It is the word used in the Syriac of Matthew iii. 7,

in translating the phrase "the wrath to come". That gives us at once the sense of the verse in the Qur'ān passage. *Rugz* was evidently one of those Aramaic Christian words which Muhammad either adopted or found ready to his hand. The motive of "fleeing from the wrath to come" thus appears in this early passage as a sincerely personal one.

In fact, the notion of a Judgement of some kind, either in this life or in a life to come, is almost necessarily involved in the moral consciousness. In one at Muhammad's stage of culture the moral requirements of God's service could hardly have been recognised except as accompanied by the sanction of rewards and punishments. The idea of a Judgement of God upon man's life must in some form or other have been in his mind from the very start. It is one of his most fundamental convictions repeated again and again in the course of the Qur'ān that "the world has not been made in sport", and that therefore it counts, and counts infinitely, whether or not man's actions are in accord with the Creator's will. If we read the Qur'ān at all sympathetically we cannot but feel the trembling fear of the wrath of God that lay upon the heart of the man who composed it, whether implanted there by some influence of Christian Monasticism we cannot say. It is specially perceptible in the early portions, delivered before the assurance of God's favour towards himself had grown so strong as it was in his Medinan days. Tradition, for what it is worth, confirms this impression of the fear of God's wrath that dwelt constantly in the

Prophet's mind. No doubt it lay behind his religious work from the very start. That was what drove him on to his task.

It was different, I think, with the concrete conceptions of the Judgement Day, and of the Paradise and the Fire which lay beyond it. These were not in his mind to begin with, and it was after he had begun to deliver the Qur'ān that they wove themselves into the texture of his thought. They came to him from without, but none the less they made a tremendous impression upon him personally. The agitated, semi-poetical character of his early descriptions of the End of all things shows how the Prophet himself was moved. That argues at once for the recent acquisition of these ideas, and for the personal response which they called forth in himself. They were in line with his own fundamental beliefs, and they came to him from a source which to him was invested with authority.

What that was we shall perhaps understand better if we turn to another of his fundamental ideas. Muhammad's prophecies took the form of a Qur'ān. He uses the term practically from the start. In these early passages it does not of course mean the whole collection of prophecies, as it now means when we speak of "the Qur'ān". Each separate deliverance is in fact a *qur'ān*. There has been some discussion as to the meaning of the verb *qara'* and the related word *qur'ān*. But there can be no doubt, and it is now agreed that they belong to that religious vocabulary which Christianity had introduced into Arabia. *Qara'* means to read or solemnly recite sacred texts,

while *qur'ān* is the Syriac *qeryāna* used to denote the "reading" or Scripture lesson.¹ We have seen that Muhammad's first enterprise was the reform of religion in Mecca. There was only One God, who had claims upon the grateful worship of man. He knew that the worship of the One God prevailed all round Arabia, and especially in that great Roman Empire which must have seemed to an intelligent Arab, dissatisfied with the condition of his own people, the seat of enlightenment, culture, and civilisation. What more natural than that he should turn thither for information as to what the worship of the one God involved? May we suppose him to have seen Christian services on some youthful visit to Syria, or should we suppose him simply to have made inquiries when his own plan began to take shape in his mind? In either case he would come to realise that the worship of the one God included stated services or prayers. Thus he instituted the *ṣalāt*, the formal prayer or divine service. The word which denotes it is a borrowed Christian word. It is not quite clear that the *ṣalāt* was practised from the very beginning, but it is certain that it was a very early institution of Islam, though the five prayers at stated times of the day were not regulated until much later. In any case the religion of the One God implied the possession of a Holy Scripture. Even if he had never been out of Mecca Muhammad could not have been ignorant of the possession by Christians of a Book which was believed to have been directly revealed. For as

¹ Cf. Horovitz in *Der Islam*, xiii. (1923), p. 66 ff.

we have seen that was common knowledge among the Arabs. What that Book contained was not so generally known and was certainly in my opinion not known to Muhammad. But the existence of the Book itself he must have known about.

How Muhammad came to believe that he was commissioned to produce such a Scripture or Book of Revelation for his own countrymen is difficult for us to understand. Tradition, as I have said, is a very unsafe guide. The Qur'ān does contain one or two references to a vision, or perhaps two visions, in passages which are fairly early, but certainly not among the very earliest :

*By the declining star,
Your comrade is not astray, nor does he err,
Nor does he speak of his own desire.
It is nothing but a revelation revealed
Taught by one strong in power
Of definite form. With equal poise he stood
While he was on the high horizon.
Then he drew near and came down
Until he was two bow-lengths off or nearer,
And revealed to his servant what he revealed.
The heart does not falsify what it saw.
Do you dispute with it as to what it sees ?
He saw him too when he came down a second time
By the lote-tree at the boundary
Near the garden of the dwelling,
When the lote-tree was enveloped by what enveloped it.
The eye turned not aside nor caused illusion.
Verily he saw one of the great signs of his Lord.*

(liii. vv. 1-18.)

But if such a vision lay at the root of his prophetic work, he made curiously little of it, only referring to it in one other passage ; and in Surah xvii. v. 62 we find the curious statement : “ *We appointed the vision which we showed you only as a test for men, likewise the tree cursed in the Qur’ān. We terrify them but they only increase in crass rebellion.* ”

Perhaps we are too ready to follow the Moslem commentators and traditionists in assuming that the idea of the Book sent down from Heaven and revealed to him as occasion required by the intermediary of the Angel Gabriel was in Muhammad’s mind from the very beginning. There is no real evidence of that in the Qur’ān itself. The word Book (*kitāb*) is used in early Meccan portions of the Qur’ān in an entirely different sense from that of the heavenly archetype of the revelation. On the Judgement Day the Book will be produced. Every soul will be brought face to face with its book, which will be put in its right hand or its left, according as it has done well or ill. This is evidently something like the idea of the Book kept in Heaven by the Recording Angel. The idea of the Book as the heavenly archetype of the Qur’ān belongs to a later stage. There are indeed frequent references to revelation in the very earliest passages of the Qur’ān, but in practically every case it is possible to interpret these as references to the Revelation already in the hands of previous Monotheists. When, for instance, we read in Surah lxxx. vv. 11-15—a passage which has not much connection with what precedes or follows :

*Nay, it is a Warning,
Take heed of it who will,
In leaves, honoured,
Exalted, kept pure
By the hands of scribes worthy and pious,*

it is only dogmatic interpretation which finds there a reference to the heavenly archetype of the Qur'ān. It is much more natural to take it as a reference to the Bible so carefully preserved by Christians or by Jews. The statement (lxxxv. vv. 21, 22) :

*Verily it is a glorious Qur'ān
in a preserved Tablet.*

may, and if it is early, I think should be, similarly interpreted, especially as by a mere change of vowel it can be made to read "*preserved in a tablet*". When we find references in equally early passages to *aṣ-ṣuḥuf al-ula*, the first or former pages, and to *ṣuḥuf Ibrāhīm wa Mūsa*, "the pages of Abraham and Moses", or to the "pages of Moses" alone, it is clear that what is in Muhammad's mind is primarily the Revelation as in the hands of men. That is what is so carefully preserved. He has been making inquiries about that revelation, and has learned so much about it. That his sources of information were very restricted and imperfect is shown by the references to "the pages of Abraham".

We shall see later at what stage the idea of the Book given him from Heaven took definite shape in his mind. His original conception of his messages was probably a much more modest one. My own impression is that he began to produce

these *qeryāne* or oracles without any very exalted idea of his own prophetic office, and that his prophetic consciousness gradually developed as his mission proceeded, the process being aided by his preoccupation with former prophets. Probably his purpose was to reproduce in Arabic form the gist of what had been revealed to other peoples. There are passages in the Qur'ān which are not spoken in the name of God at all. Others, while addressed to the Prophet, are much of the nature of apostrophes to himself, or self-encouragements. It took him some time to acquire the habit of putting the Qur'ān in the actual words of God. Even to the end there is a certain awkwardness about it, a statement being frequently put in the mouth of God by the simple device of a command, "Say," addressed to the Prophet. The settled habit ultimately is that God is represented as using the "WE" of majesty, but in earlier passages the first person singular is often used.

For a good deal that the Qur'ān contains, Muhammad must have considered that no special revelation was necessary. The recognition of God as the Creator Who had claims upon the grateful service of men, was open to any right-thinking person. His early idea of Revelation was that it had reference to what was otherwise hidden from the knowledge of men. In that early passage so often referred to, Surah xcvi., he speaks of God first as the Creator and then as having "by the pen", *i.e.* by written revelation, "taught man what he did not know". It is the secrets of the Divine counsel, the Judge-

ment and the life to come, which are the subjects of revelation. That such a body of revealed truth existed Muhammad did not doubt, but he seems to have learned only very gradually how it was supposed to have come to those who had it, and what it really consisted of. But as there was only one God, so to him there could only be one revelation. The form did not much matter. Not being acquainted with the letter of Scripture he did not trouble himself about verbal accuracy. It was the body of truth which Revelation contained, which he was concerned to bring to the knowledge of his fellow-townsmen. To him the knowledge of the revealed secrets was just as real as the knowledge of Nature which was already open to those who had eyes to see. To put that knowledge in Arabic form for those who, strangely, had not before received it, was probably what he conceived his function to be. In beginning his work at Mecca then I do not believe that Muhammad had anything like the exalted conception of the prophetic office which he afterwards came to hold. That he put forward a fairly high claim to leadership and obedience to himself as the apostle of the true religion is, I think, probable, if not at the very first, at any rate very early. The opposition of the Quraish was, I think, partly due to that.

Having started to produce these oracles or *qeryāne*, Muhammad devoted a great deal of pains to the composition of them. Composition did not come easy to him. The slovenliness, the trailing sentences, the mechanical rhymes of the later portions of the Qur'ān have often been

remarked on. They are by no means explained by the difference of subject. But in Medina he had become the busy head of a community; his position as the mouthpiece of God on earth was established. He had not the time, nor did he need to devote the same care to their composition. Perhaps, too, there was a falling-off of the poetic fire, only we must remember that he was over forty when he began his work, and that the poetic force of the early portions of the Qur'ān was not simply due to the stirrings of youthful imagination. These early portions are really very powerful. They are short, crisp, with a certain obscurity probably designed; but for their purpose wonderfully expressive and impressive. There was point in the sneer of the Meccans that he was a poet. A poet he was, but not of the ordinary Arab type. For religion and righteousness and judgement to come were his themes, themes which the ordinary Arab poet hardly touched. There was a great deal of conscious art about this so-called crack-brained enthusiast of the Last Judgement. There is a passage which seems to me to show him at the labour of composition, Surah lxxiii. vv. 1-8 (v. 3 and the beginning of v. 4 is evidently a later insertion):

*O thou who hast taken up thy burden*¹
Stay up all night except a short while,

. . . *and make the Qur'ān distinct.*
Verily we shall cast upon thee a weighty word.

¹ The meaning of the word is uncertain.

*The beginning of the night is strongest in impression
and most just in speech.*

*Truly in the day-time long toil is thine,
But remember the name of thy Lord, and devote
thyself entirely to Him.*

Moslem piety interprets that passage differently, and makes it refer to the recitation of the Qur'ān in devotion. That adaptation is already made in the Surah as it stands, and must have been made by Muhammad himself. But the phrase, "We shall cast upon thee a weighty word", seems to imply a different situation originally; and v. 5, the sense of which seems to be that the early part of the night is the time when truths are most clearly apprehended and the right words to express them most easily found, can hardly apply to the devotional repetition of words already known.

Summing up these impressions of the beginnings of Muhammad's work, we have, I think, to conceive of him as a man of great natural endowment, but little in advance of fellow-citizens in actual knowledge; with strong personal convictions, reached without much external help, impressed upon him by his own meditations upon Nature and the meaning of life, aided by such notions from a higher religion as had found their way into the minds of his countrymen. He knows that this higher religion prevails all around Arabia, and impelled by some inner call of duty he sets his hand to the task of establishing it in his own city, and as a corollary begins to produce what worship according to this religion required,

religious texts to be read or recited in worship and devotion. Detailed knowledge of the religion which prevailed around Arabia he has none. He probably assumed that it was simply the natural religion which he himself had reached. Nor has he any ready means of access to the Scriptures which it cherished. But he knows of the existence of these Scriptures, and he soon feels the need of obtaining some knowledge of what they contained. The rest of his career in Mecca is characterised by his efforts to acquire knowledge of the contents of Scripture and the moulding influence which that knowledge had upon him.

LECTURE IV

THE MOULDING OF THE PROPHET

IN the previous lecture, the independence of Muhammad was insisted on. That, however, had reference to the beginnings of his mission. It was not intended to deny, what is indeed undeniable, that there was a great deal of direct influence exerted upon him by Judaism and Christianity, and that much of the Qur'ān is directly dependent upon the Bible, and stories associated with the Bible. That influence was of cardinal importance, but it was in the course of his mission rather than before it began that it was exerted. He thoroughly believed that the Monotheistic religion which prevailed around Arabia was the same as that which he sought to establish. How could there be more than one form of the religion of the One God? He also thoroughly believed that this Monotheistic religion had preserved a Revelation, which perhaps he conceived of as an original revelation given to man, but lost and forgotten by idolaters. In any case he had no hesitation in adopting, as his own belief, what he discovered to be part of this revelation, or in fact anything which he found to be believed and related in connection with it, by

those who followed the religion of the One God. He made no concealment of his borrowing from that source. Why should he? Could there be more than one revelation? God might make known His decrees to different peoples in different forms, but the actual content of the Revelation must always be the same. To find out what it was and put it in Arabic form, was that not to give his people the Revelation? But he had evidently great difficulty in finding out what Revelation, or the Scripture which he soon discovered was regarded as the record of it, really contained. He took everything which came to him as connected with Scripture as being part of the Revelation, and accepted it implicitly—until he found that he had been led astray. Then he conceived a deep resentment against those whom he accused of having falsified the Scriptures.

To us, knowing the result and tracing his borrowings from Christianity and Judaism, there often appears to be a certain designed and cunning opportuneness in them. He seems to adopt what suits his own purposes at the moment, and to pass by what does not suit them; when he has attained some immediate object he drops what he had previously adopted; and finally, when he is strong enough, he breaks with the Jews and the Christians in turn. It would be easy to make out a case against him as having been absolutely unscrupulous. That would be, however, a misunderstanding of him. The reason for the apparent opportuneness of his borrowings is, I think, that knowledge only came to him as

a result of his own inquiries, and he had often enough difficulty in finding an answer to his inquiries. Naturally it was his own circumstances and the necessities of his own enterprise which prompted these inquiries, and so led to his discovering things pretty much just when he could make use of them.

We found that Muhammad began by an appeal to the gratitude of men and their recognition of God's bounties in creation. He soon found himself up against the hard-heartedness of the wealthy Meccans. His appeal produced little effect. He was convinced that such disobedience must incur the wrath of God. But he had no very definite conceptions of the manner in which the punishment would be inflicted. At first he simply says that God will punish. God, who has power to create, has power to deal with man's disobedience. If his wealthy fellow-citizens will not show their gratitude by worship and generosity he will simply turn from them and leave them to God, who will deal with them. But apparently he could not rest at that, or they would not leave him alone. So we soon find him feeling round for material with which to enforce the truth that disobedience will inevitably bring punishment. He begins to hint at former examples of God's punishment. It is natural to suppose that on some caravan journey to Syria the vestiges of a vanished civilisation which still remain at Meda'in Salih, and perhaps even those at Petra, had been seen by Muhammad, and that he had brooded over the meaning of them. At any rate he makes frequent reference in the

Qur'ān to the vanished peoples 'Ād and Thamūd, whom God had destroyed for their unbelief and disobedience. In later passages he tells these stories at some length, but at first his references to them are quite short as to something well known. It is Arab material which he is using. With them are conjoined similar references to the destruction of Pharaoh and his hosts. It is not necessary, I think, at this stage to assume that he is drawing upon actual knowledge of the Old Testament. So far as these early references require that story may have been sufficiently known in Arabia. When he has gained some knowledge of the Old Testament at a later stage, he tells that story also more fully. These constitute his earliest sanctions for his message. Note that they have nothing to do with the End of the World, but imply a special punishment upon the unbelieving people.

Soon, however, he comes upon a mass of material which admirably suits his purpose of impressing upon the hard-hearted Meccans the consequences of their unbelief, and at the same time makes a deep impression upon himself. It is what we may call, generally, Apocalyptic material—the description of the End of the World, the Judgement Day, the Pains of Hell for the wicked, and the Joys of Heaven for the believers.¹ All this material is directly borrowed. In fact, so far as the descriptions of the End of the World are concerned, almost every detail of

¹ It is another indication that his preaching of the Judgement arose out of opposition that descriptions of the Joys of Heaven lag considerably behind those of the Pains of Hell. They come in as it were as an afterthought to balance the other.

them can be paralleled in well-known books of Apocalyptic. But it was borrowed from a source which Muhammad assumed to be one of absolute authority. It was in fact for him the content of that Revelation which previous Monotheists had received, and which they regarded as so sacred. We have seen that brooding upon the question as to what the Revelation, which he knew existed, could have reference to, he had come to the conclusion that it must contain what man could not otherwise know. What was revealed was *al-ghaib*, the secrets of the divine counsel. Now he has found some source of information from which he derives what seems to him to fulfil that definition.

We have no means of knowing what that source of information was. He does not reproduce any known book of Apocalyptic closely enough to make us suspect that he had secured a copy. From what we know of his methods later it is very improbable that he used any written source. He would rely upon oral information given him in response to his inquiries. We cannot even say definitely whether it was Jewish or Christian informants with whom he had got in touch. This Apocalyptic material was originally Jewish, and it might have been cherished in Jewish circles in Arabia. The main stream of Judaism had, however, practically dropped Apocalyptic after the Fall of Jerusalem in the first century A.D. It was by the Christian Church rather than by Judaism that these Apocalyptic books were preserved, and it was in popular rather than in official Christianity that

Apocalyptic was really alive—as it lives in popular Christianity to this day. Will it be far wrong to surmise that Muhammad got his information from some Christian (perhaps Abyssinian) slave in Mecca, and that he then gave the material form in his *qur'āns*?¹

Muhammad's source of information was in any case a very imperfect one; for it left him with the impression that this and practically this alone was the content of Revelation. The carefully written and preserved Book is a warning of coming Judgement (Surah lxxx. vv. 11-15, quoted above). His own *Qur'ān*, reproducing it, is a warning. For a time he uses the word *tadhkira*, "warning", as practically synonymous with *qur'ān*: "*Verily this is a warning (tadhkira), and whoso willeth chooseth a road to his Lord*" (lxxiii. v. 19; lxxvi. v. 29; cf. lxxiv. v. 54; lxxx. v. 11 f.). He himself is a "warner", *nadhīr*. The use of *tadhkira* to denote his message is soon dropped, but the association of the *Qur'ān* with warning remains. "*Verily it is just a warning and a clear qur'ān*" (xxxvi. v. 69, rebutting the charge that it is poetry). "*Therefore we have revealed to thee an Arabic qur'ān that thou mayest warn the mother city (Mecca) and all around it, that thou mayest warn them of that Day of the Gathering, of which there is no doubt, when part shall be in Paradise and part in the Flame*" (xlii. v. 5). "*Warn then by the Qur'ān those who fear My threat*" is a command addressed to the Prophet (l. v. 45). The *Qur'ān* is described as

¹ Cf. what Nöldeke said as to the probable sources of Muhammad's knowledge of Christianity, so long ago as 1858, *Z.D.M.G.* xii. p. 699 ff.

“*full of warning*” (xxxviii. v. 1). In fact for a simple warning the Qur’ān became in course of time rather varied and voluminous, so that we find the unbelievers saying, “*If this Qur’ān had been sent down to him all at once. . . .*” So also the Qur’ān is said to come *bil-ḥaqq*. In late passages this phrase means “with the truth”, but its early sense is “with the Judgement”, *ḥaqq* being used in the same way as the Hebrew *ṣedheq* and *ṣedhāqā* are in Apocalyptic contexts. Before the end of the Meccan period the Qur’ān comes to be associated with other things, but its association with warning is at first exclusive and a warning it continues to be right through.

It is an indication that this Apocalyptic material imposed itself upon Muhammad from the outside as it were, that it mingles in his mind with another idea, which, while not necessarily inconsistent with it, derives from a different sphere of thought, viz. that of a special judgement upon unbelievers. This latter was implied in his references to ‘Ād and Thamūd, and to Pharaoh and his hosts. But it was not immediately developed. For a time it is overlaid and thrust into the background by the other idea of the general Resurrection and Judgement, with the Torments of Hell and the Joys of Heaven to follow. All the imagery of Christian and Jewish Apocalyptic and Eschatology is used to enforce his message. Perhaps at first Muhammad did not clearly distinguish the two things. Or he may have been so absorbed in the Apocalyptic drama that the other idea fell for the time into the background. Ultimately the two things are

quite clearly distinguished and conjoined. It becomes a frequent statement that the unbelievers will suffer calamity in this world, and painful punishment in the world to come. The idea of the Last Judgement maintains itself to the end. But before the close of the Meccan period it passes into the realm of assured dogma in Muhammad's mind. The emotional fervour and poetic power dies away from his proclamation of it, and ultimately a great many of the details are dropped or at least taken for granted. In Medina he does not enter upon such full descriptions of the End of the World, or of the After Life, as he gives in Meccan passages. It is then sufficient to refer in general terms to these things as sanctions of other requirements which he wishes to enforce.

Though thus for a time in the early period of the composition of the Qur'ān overshadowed, the idea of a special Calamity to fall upon the unbelievers of Mecca by no means disappeared. It asserted itself again alongside the other, and it soon began to find confirmation in the stories of former prophets. His own position in Mecca would stimulate his interest in accounts of others who had brought God's messages to their peoples, and we may conceive of him inquiring for such stories. 'Ād and Thamūd perished, he discovers, for their disobedience to the prophets Hūd and Šāliḥ. Whence these stories, which come to be related with considerable detail, were derived it is impossible to say. Muhammad is not likely to have invented them entirely. He probably found some Arab legends connected with the

vanished peoples, and may have given them a prophetic turn. He refers to other peoples who perished for their unbelief, for whom it is difficult to find any Biblical prototypes. He may have heard some vague Arab stories about them. But they never acquire any detail. I think it probable also that he heard something about the destruction of Pharaoh, and of the overwhelming of the Cities of the Plain, from general Arab sources before he realised that the stories were in the Bible. But he soon taps some source of information as to definitely Biblical stories, and finds there a rich mine of material for his purpose. It confirms the supposition that his information came in answer to his own inquiries that the stories evidently reached him piecemeal with no indication of any connection amongst them or of the order in which they stood in the Bible. What interests him is the prophetic stories, those of Moses, Noah, Abraham, Lot, and others. The general outline of these stories, Biblical and non-Biblical alike, becomes in his hands much the same for all. To each people God sends a Messenger, one of themselves. Even Moses and Lot are at first assumed to have been sent to their own people. The Prophet appeals to his people to worship the true God. They refuse to listen to him. Then he announces the coming of the divine punishment upon their unbelief. As they refuse to repent the punishment falls, and the unbelievers are destroyed. Such are the "signs" (*āyāt*). The Qur'ān now contains the *āyāt* or signs of God.

It is worth while looking a little further at

the meaning of this word. The word *āya* has come to be used as the technical word for a verse of the Qur'ān, and it is often stated that Muhammad set forth these verses as his "signs" or miracles. That is not correct, at any rate not for the Meccan period of the Qur'ān. It was natural that the Meccans should ask a sign, and at a certain stage Muhammad is much occupied with the problem of what signs he can offer. Sorely tempted as he must have been to profess power to work miracles, he never does so. The most that he alleges of a miraculous kind is the having seen one or two visions. The signs he offers are of two kinds: first, what we may call the natural evidences of God's power, such as the creation of the heavens and the earth, the formation of man in the womb, the sending of rain and the production of food; second—and it is on this that he falls back at the acute stage of the question—what we may call the historical examples of God's miraculous intervention. That is what he is in search of in inquiring into these prophetic stories. When in the earlier Surahs we meet the phrase, *idha tutla āyātuna . . .*, "when our *āyāt* are recited . . .", where it seems natural to take *āyāt* in the sense of "verses", the reference is really not to verses but to the recounting of these signs.

These prophetic stories are at first limited to those connected with the Old Testament. What we may call the native Arabian ones are pushed entirely into the background—another indication of the paramount authority which Muhammad ascribed to what he conceived to belong to

previous revelation. But he is not copying directly from the Old Testament. While most of the stories are easily recognisable, the correspondence is never close enough for direct dependence of that kind. The simplest explanation would be that Muhammad has now got in touch with Jews and is repeating stories which he has learned orally from them. The fact that a great deal of Jewish legendary material, such as is found in Talmudic literature, is associated with the Old Testament stories goes to confirm that. On the other hand, we have to remember that a great deal of that legendary material was also current among Christians. Some of the names of the prophets also show that they have come not direct from the Old Testament, but have passed through Greek or Syriac before reaching Muhammad, such as *Ilyās* for Elijah, *Yūnus* for Jonah, even *Fir'aun* for Pharaoh. In course of time, too, he includes among his narratives of the signs of God stories which are not connected with the Old Testament, or with the Jews, but with Christianity. The stories of the Virgin Mary and the Birth of Jesus appear among them quite on the same footing as the others. These are related, however, not as in the New Testament, but more in the form in which they appear in Apocryphal Gospels. (They have most similarity with the Protevangelium Jacobi, a book which we know to have been widely diffused in the East.) When these stories first occur in the Qur'ān there is no indication that they come from a source antagonistic to or even different from the others. They are simply like the

others recounted as signs of God's miraculous intervention.

It is beside the mark to inquire at this stage whether Muhammad is more in contact with Jews or with Christians. He did not at all distinguish between them, and is perhaps not directly in contact with either. What we have to do with is the brooding religious genius and man of great native mental power, but very limited knowledge, striving to find out what others more enlightened than his own Arab people knew, which might be of use to him in his own enterprise; perhaps, too, restricted in his inquiries by the necessity of avoiding too open association with, or borrowing from, those who professed an alien faith. Muhammad is not identifying himself either with Jews or Christians, but is collecting information from any source open to him, and getting it often at third or fourth hand rather than at first. That this was so is confirmed by the gibes of his opponents, reported in the Qur'ān. "*This is nothing but falsehood which he has devised, and other people have helped him to it.*" "*Tales of the Ancients, which he has transcribed for himself. They are recited to him morning and evening.*" That charge he simply meets by the counter-assertion that "God had revealed it" (xxv. v. 5 ff.)—which might be ambiguous, but was true, if we assume that Muhammad himself accepted it as derived from previous revelation. In another passage he meets the similar charge, that it was a man who taught him what he delivered, by pointing out that the person they hinted at spoke a foreign language while his

revelations were pure Arabic (xvi. v. 105). In another passage (xxix. v. 47) he denies, evidently meeting an accusation brought against him, that he had ever read any (revealed) book but his own, or that he had transcribed one. It is not certain whether the verse quoted above means that he had had books transcribed for him, or whether there is any truth in the charge. He may have thus got copies of some Apocryphal books, but if so he was dependent on getting some one, who perhaps happened to be in Mecca, to read them and tell him what was in them.

Another proof that he is not working on any real acquaintance with the Bible itself, but is dependent on the third-hand relation of stories, is found in the fact that he includes in the Qur'ān a version of the Legend of the Seven Sleepers, references to the story of Alexander the Great, and the Legend of Moses and al-Khidr, stories which were never associated with the Bible, but were spread all over the East, so that a chance informant may well have told them to Muhammad as stories connected with that massive religion which surrounded Arabia.

We have run a little ahead, and you will perhaps have noticed that some of the things which I have just mentioned as being included in the Qur'ān are not exactly of the nature of the prophetic "signs" in which the rejection of the appeal of a prophet is followed by a calamity falling upon unbelievers. The "signs" come to have a wide range, and any wonderful story may be included amongst them. With great difficulty Muhammad did at last begin to get some informa-

tion as to the contents of that Book which he knew to be held so sacred and to be so carefully preserved. He discovered that it was not as he had supposed exclusively devoted to "warning". This, we may imagine, was a little disconcerting to him. That it caused some modification of his ideas and plans he tells us quite plainly (xx. v. 113), representing himself as being addressed by God in the words: "*Do not hasten with the Qur'ân before the revelation of it to thee is finished, but say 'My Lord increase me in knowledge'*"; or as in xlii. v. 52, "*Thou didst not know what the Book was nor the Faith; but we have made it a light by which we guide those of our servants whom we will. See, thou wilt guide to a right path.*" Various results seem to follow from this. For one thing there is an increase in the range of Biblical and other material introduced into the Qur'ân. The creation of the heavens and the earth in six days admirably fits in with his idea of the Divine power. The creation of man from clay for a time displaces the emphasis he had laid upon the origin of the embryo in the womb, but he soon finds it possible to combine the two. The story of Joseph comes to him as a pleasant surprise, causing him apparently some regret that he had been so long in getting to know it. "*We shall relate to thee the best of stories in revealing to thee this Qur'ân, though thou hast hitherto been one of the negligent*"; so begins Surah xii. (v. 3)—Allah as usual addressing the prophet—after which follows the story of Joseph at considerable length. Throughout the Meccan period, however, his main preoccupation continues to be with the

stories of the prophets, which he tells and retells in growing detail as he learns more of them. He begins to learn something of their relations to each other in the Bible. In particular, he displays great interest in the story of Moses, and gets to know something of his connection with the revelation of Scripture. To these points I shall have to return again, as I believe they had momentous consequences.

It will be convenient, however, to note here some effects of his increasing acquaintance with the contents of Revelation or, to speak more accurately, with what those who had received the Revelation believed, though in thus grouping them together we shall be carried to some extent out of historical order. One effect was the introduction of *mathals* or parables into the Qur'ān. Some of these are mere similes or similitudes, and they might be regarded as arising spontaneously were it not that they are so solemnly introduced. Thus in xxxvi. v. 12, the Prophet receives the command "*Coin a mathal for them*", upon which follows what looks like a garbled reminiscence of the account of Paul and Barnabas at Antioch, mixed up with the story of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra. In xiv. v. 29, we find "*Dost thou not see how thy Lord has coined a mathal*", whereupon follows a reminiscence of the comparison of a good man to a tree in Psalm i., "*God coins mathals or men in the hope that they may take heed*", xiv. v. 30; "*God is not ashamed to coin a mathal*", ii. v. 24. Some of these parables are stories of some length, as for instance that in xviii. v. 31 ff., the motif of which is much the same as that of

the rich fool in the Gospels. Perhaps the most remarkable of them all is that in xxiv. v. 34 f. :
“ *We have sent down to you demonstrative signs, and a parable from those who have passed away before you, and an admonition to those who fear (God). God is the light of the heaven and the earth, his light is like a window in which is a lamp, the lamp in glass, and the glass like a brilliant star, lit from a blessed tree, an olive neither of East nor West, whose oil would almost give light, though fire had not touched it, light upon light ; God guideth to his light whom he will. God coineth parables for men, and God knoweth all things* ”. The introductory verse practically tells us that this simile is founded on something which Muhammad has heard of as existing among previous Monotheists, but where we cannot say. The word used for “ window ” is, according to Nöldeke, Abyssinian, and may indicate an Abyssinian source for the mathal. On the other hand it reminds us of the frequent references in pre-Islamic poetry to the light of the monk’s cell, guiding the traveller across the desert. The Christian atmosphere of the simile is made clearer by what follows : “ *In houses which God has allowed to be reared, and in which he has allowed his name to be held in remembrance, men ascribe praise to him morning and evening, whom neither merchandise nor traffic beguile from the remembrance of God, the observance of prayer and the giving of alms, in fear of a day when both hearts and eyes shall be agitated.* ” The men whom neither merchandise nor traffic beguile from the remembrance of God can hardly be other than Christian

priests or monks. Till near the end of his career Muhammad had a particularly friendly feeling for them.¹

Muhammad's way of referring to the God whom he worshipped also shows some development. It was probably under the influence of the information he was now acquiring as to monotheistic religion as it prevailed among non-Arabs, that he introduced the word *ar-Raḥmān*, which he used for a time almost as a proper name for God. The word does not seem, however, to be directly derived from Aramaic. It is found in South Arabian inscriptions, and may have come through that channel. Or it may be a native Arabic formation from the root *rahm*. In any case, like the kindred word *rahma* in the sense of "mercy", it comes ultimately from Hebrew and Aramaic, and the prominence which this idea begins to assume is due to outside influence. He discovers, too, that there are many epithets for God. He is the possessor of "beautiful names" (*al-asmā' al-ḥusna*). *Ar-Raḥmān* is no doubt one of them. The use of this word as a proper name seems, however,

¹ As illustrating the kind of thing which lies behind this simile it may be interesting to cite what Sir John Maundeville relates about the oil of the Church of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai. "There is the Chirche of Seynte Kateryne, in the whiche ben many lampes brennyng. For thei han of Oyle of Olyves y now, bothe for to brenne in here Lampes and to ete also. And that plentee have thei be Myracle of God. For the Ravenes and the Crowes and the Choughes and other Fowles of the Contree assemblen hem there every year ones, and fleen thider as in pilgrimage, and everyche of hem bringeth a Braunche of the Bayes or of Olyve, in here Bekes, instede of Offryng, and leven hem there; of the whiche the Monkes maken gret plentee of Oyle: and this is a gret Marvaylle. . . . And when they chesen another Prelate, gif he be a gode man and worthi to be Prelate his Lampe schal lighte, with the Grace of God, withoute touchyng of ony Man."

to have led to difficulty, and as such it is soon dropped.

Muhammad had, in fact, to meet the difficulty which we, to whom the idea of God is familiar, hardly realise, but which confronts all those who seek to introduce a high religion amongst a people of primitive ideas, whose language has no term for God quite free from polytheistic associations. He begins by using *rabb*, "Lord", generally in some combination, such as "my Lord", "thy Lord," or, as we have seen, "Lord of this house". Then he uses *Allah*, but rather hesitatingly, either because it was not proper Arabic or because it was already combined with belief in subordinate deities. Then *ar-Rahmān* appears alongside it. The use of too many names, however, had its disadvantages. It might lend colour to polytheistic ideas again. He seems to have solved the difficulty finally by adopting *Allah* as the name for the Deity, retaining *rabb* in the sense of Lord, and associating with both words, descriptive epithets, and phrases, which he repeats almost to weariness. These set phrases were convenient as rhyming conclusions to verses. But they also had their use in dinning into the minds of his community his conception of God as all-powerful, all-knowing, as Judge and Ruler, as glorious, merciful, and compassionate.

Not only in the names of God but in the teachings of the Qur'ān greater stress is now laid upon the Mercy of God. Towards unbelievers there is still the same implacable threat of punishment. But God is merciful towards those who believe. Part of their blessedness in the world

to come is Forgiveness, which takes its place alongside the "Gardens underneath which rivers flow" as part of their reward. That, of course, corresponds to Muhammad's position as now the head of a band of believers, small as that band might still be. The Messenger continues to be a warner to those who do not believe, but he becomes at the same time a bringer of good tidings to those who believe. So also there is a change in the descriptions given of the Qur'ān. It is no longer merely a warning. It is said to be a mercy to the believers. It is Wisdom and Guidance. In words reminiscent of a Christian phrase, the Prophet and the Qur'ān are asserted to be sent "to guide men from darkness to the light". Lastly, the Qur'ān is referred to as, or at any rate associated with, *al-Furqān*. We have, however, reached the Medinan period before that association takes place, though the word *furqān* is used earlier.

The sense of this word will, I think, repay study, and I wish to devote some attention to it. Its use in the Qur'ān has always been something of an enigma to interpreters, and I doubt if it has ever been properly explained, though Knieschke has nearly hit the mark in his definition of it as "Erlösung von der Stunde des Gerichts".¹

The word *furqān* occurs altogether seven times in the Qur'ān, mostly in Medinan passages. Its earliest occurrence, however, is in a Meccan Surah, xxi. v. 49: "We gave to Moses and Aaron the *Furqān*, and an illumination and a warning to the pious". Other passages in which the word

¹ Knieschke, *Erlösungslehre des Korans*, p. 11 ff.

occurs are: xxv. v. 1; “*Blessed be he who has sent down the Furqān upon his servant (evidently Muhammad) that he might become a warner to the world*”; ii. v. 50: “*When we gave Moses the Book and the Furqān*”; ii. v. 181: “*The month of Ramadān in which was sent down the Qur’ān as guidance to men and demonstrative evidences of the Guidance and the Furqān*”; iii. v. 2: “*He (God) has sent down to you the Book in truth, confirming what was before it, and he sent down the Torah and the Evangel in former times as Guidance to men, and he sent down the Furqān*”; viii. v. 29: “*O ye who believe if ye fear God he will appoint for you a Furqān, and will forgive your evil deeds and pardon you*”. In all these cases, we might as Nöldeke says, content ourselves with some such meaning as “illumination” or “revelation”, but the difficulty arises from the occurrence of the word in viii. v. 42, a passage referring evidently to the battle of Badr, where after some directions about the spoil, we read: “*If ye have believed in God and what we have revealed to our servant on the day of the Furqān, the day when the two parties met*”. It is clear that the day of the battle of Badr is referred to as the day of the *Furqān*. No such sense as “illumination” will suit this passage, and Nöldeke suggests that the meaning of the Arabic root *frq*, “to separate”, here influenced the use of the word, giving it the sense of “separation” or “decision”. I believe that the sense of the Arabic root did influence the meaning not only here, but in all the passages where the word occurs.

The word however is not Arabic, nor has it

any connection, as used to be assumed, with the Hebrew *pereq* (plur. *perāqim*), used to denote a section of the Mishna. Scholars are now agreed that the word is borrowed from the Syriac *pūrḡāna*, meaning in Christian language "salvation". It is one of the words which came to Muhammad in the course of his inquiries into the religion of those who were already monotheists. But Muhammad always gives his own stamp or twist to everything. To discover the exact sense which the word assumed in his use of it, we shall have to hark back to what was in his mind about the time when the word first occurs.

We have seen that he was intensely interested in the prophetic stories. Now at a certain point Moses begins to stand out from the rest of the prophets whom he mentions. He has discovered that it was Moses to whom "The Book" was given. Muhammad's lists of prophets are worth studying. If you look at them you will find that at this point in his career Moses is said to have received "The Book" and none of the other prophets have. This may indicate that he is now in direct touch with Jews. But at any rate Moses is for him at this stage the great prophet. It was he to whom this wonderful "Book", in which Muhammad was so much interested, had been revealed. It is here, I think, that the idea of the Book which came down from Heaven begins to work in Muhammad's mind, motivated by the mechanical idea of inspiration of both Jews and Christians, or more probably, by the story of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai.

We have seen also that under the influence of these prophetic stories the idea of a special calamity to fall upon unbelievers comes into prominence again after having been for a while overlaid by the Apocalyptic idea. There is no doubt that Muhammad proclaimed the imminence of a special and particular judgement upon the Meccans. We even find him suggesting that the calamity might come by the withholding of rain and the cutting off of water (xxiii. v. 18 ; lxvii. v. 30).¹ He represents this Judgement as following almost immediately upon the rejection of the message, and has some difficulty in explaining the delay. It is usually assumed that having thus got into trouble he covered it up and quietly dropped the idea of this special Judgement. Now, for one thing, Muhammad really believed that such a Judgement must come, and for another, it is just one of the main elements of his greatness that he never does drop an idea that has really taken hold of his mind. Muhammad is as inexorable as fate. He shrinks from no conclusion and from no measure that may appear to him necessary to make these conclusions accomplished facts. He did not drop the idea of a special Judgement upon Mecca until to his mind it had become an accomplished fact.

If you look at his stories of the prophets again you will find that in the later versions he is preoccupied with the question, "What happens to the Believers when the Calamity falls upon the unbelieving people ?" In even the shortest

¹ For other suggestions cf. xxxiv. v. 9 ; xvi. v. 47 ff.

reference to a prophet at this stage he does not omit to mention that the Prophet, and those who had responded to his appeal, were saved out of the destruction which overtook the others. It is into that circle of ideas in his mind that the word *pūrḡāna*, the Christian word for salvation, falls. Remembering the meaning of the Arabic root it is easy to see how he associated it with the separation of the believers from the unbelievers when the Catastrophe fell. *Furḡān* is deliverance from the judgement.

Now recall that the great story in his mind at this time is that of Moses. The Law was given to Moses at the time of the deliverance. There we have at once the *furḡān* brought into connection with the revelation of the Book, and, still with the sense of the word in Arabic affecting his idea of it, we can see how in course of time he came to associate the distinction between believers and unbelievers with the Book or Law which was given for their guidance, and then again, the idea of the Last Judgement persisting, and perhaps some clearer conception of what Christians meant by the word coming in, we can see how he associated *furḡān* with forgiveness, as in one of the later passages (viii. v. 29) he does. But we have still the crux of the difficulty to meet. What connection had the *furḡān* with the Battle of Badr? Go back to the story of Moses and the Exodus of the Children of Israel and imagine it working in Muhammad's mind. Moses was the great prophet, the founder of this great monotheistic religion which was all around Arabia, practically world-wide—for by this time Muham-

mad is in contact with Jews, but has not realised that there is any distinction between them and Christians. I doubt if Muhammad at first realised that the story of Pharaoh and his hosts, who were overwhelmed in the Red Sea, was part of the story of Moses. These things came to him disconnectedly. Moses then was a prophet who proclaimed the true religion. Some rejected him, but some believed. The believers he led out from among the unbelieving people. The Book was given to him; "*We gave Moses the Book and the Furqān*". This community which had followed Moses becomes a conquering people and destroys the unbelieving inhabitants of the land. It is not to under-estimate Muhammad's knowledge to suggest that he may have assumed that it was the same unbelievers who had rejected Moses who were thus punished. There, in my opinion, is the suggestion of the Hijra—the exodus from Mecca—and the organisation of a fighting community of believers in Medina, who were to be the means by whose hands the Calamity, which Muhammad had so long proclaimed, was to be brought upon the unbelieving Meccans. Scarcely has Muhammad settled in Medina when, as we see from the Qur'ān, the religious dynamo begins to work at full power for the generation of war. This new orientation came as a surprise to his own followers, but there are hints of it in his versions of the story of Moses prior to the Hijra. Then in less than two years came the great event. The two parties met at Badr. All accounts agree in giving the impression that Muhammad felt the meeting to be of fateful

consequence. It was. Outwardly it has always been recognised that this was a turning point in Muhammad's career. It gave him prestige and established his power. Inwardly I think it was of equal consequence. The victory of the Moslems, 300 over thrice their number, was miraculous. The angels had been sent down to the assistance of the Prophet and his band. The Battle of Badr was the Calamity upon the unbelieving Meccans. It was the *Furqān*, the deliverance out of that Calamity, for the believers.

Here, then, at last was a real miracle. It is referred to in the Qur'ān as an *āya* or "sign". Muhammad is confirmed not only in his power but in his assurance that he is a prophet like Moses. He is no longer a warner to his own city alone. He is now "*a warner to the world*". He is the giver of laws and head of a theocratic community. He is now at last the full-fledged Prophet.

In the story of Moses the *Furqān* was associated with the giving of the Torah or the Law. Muhammad associates his *Furqān* with the revelation of the Qur'ān. That is why he says that the Qur'ān was sent down in the month of Ramadān (ii. v. 181); for the Battle of Badr was fought in the month of Ramadān. It is probably also the night of the Battle of Badr which is referred to in one of the short fragments at the end of the present Qur'ān (xcvii.) as the *lailat al-Qadr* on which "it" was sent down. I may remark also in passing that that is why the month of Ramadān was appointed as a fast-month. It is acknowledged that this institution

was introduced shortly after Badr, and the way it is referred to in the Qur'ān leaves no doubt in my mind.

Islam as it finally took shape belongs to Medina and not to Mecca. The same, I am convinced, is true of the Qur'ān itself. "The Book" sent down from Heaven and revealed to him as required has now taken concrete shape in his mind. He does not discard the earlier portions, however, any more than he discarded the prayer and ablutions which he had practised in Mecca. (He could not throw away what had cost him so much trouble, and much of which was, no doubt, imprinted upon the memory of his followers.) But I suspect that it is now that he re-edits the early passages, making the additions and changes which study of these passages themselves reveals. The character of the new revelations is different. There are no more long prophetic stories, though he still incorporates items of information which reach him concerning the beliefs of previous Monotheists. He has now to do with the regulation and guidance of a community. His deliverances become legal in content. As time goes on, they take the character of rescripts or proclamations issued by the head of a state. By the crowning mercy of Badr he has become convinced that he stands in a quite special relation to God. He is a prophet as Moses was a prophet. The Book has been sent down to him, and is revealed to him as the needs of his community demand it. That he surrounded these Divine communications with a certain mystery and led his followers to believe that they were conveyed to him by the

angel Gabriel and received by him in a state of trance is probable. There may even have been a certain amount of personal belief or self-deception in the matter. Moses, according to the story of the Exodus, received direct Divine communications; why should not he? His powerful, but in many ways primitive mind, working upon such suggestions from the story of Moses, may have devised some means which he himself believed put him in direct communication with God. Tradition, at any rate, represents that not only his followers but he himself drew a very clear distinction between his own normal thought and what he gave out as direct revelation.

Parallel to and aiding in this development other changes in Muhammad's conceptions had been taking place. Even before he left Mecca he had made further discoveries in regard to Bible history. He never forgot the difficulty he had in getting access to knowledge. He hints somewhere that the Jews had tried to make money out of his curiosity. His want of accurate knowledge misled him, and the withholding of knowledge, coupled with the misleading way in which it actually came to him, is the basis of the charge that the Jews had concealed and perverted the Scriptures. It is against the Jews that this charge is first made, though probably when he first made it Muhammad had not realised that they were distinct from the Christians. Later the same charge was made against the Christians specifically. It forms part of Moslem argument against Christians to this day. But the Jews were the first actual possessors of the

Book with whom he came into direct relations, and it was they who were blamed when he discovered that he had been misled.

By the end of his Meccan period Muhammad was beginning to get fairly direct information as to what was in Scripture, or at any rate the Old Testament portion of it. There were Jews in Medina, and he was probably already making advances to them. He seems to have assumed that they were the Bani Isra'il to whom Moses had brought the Book, though he would just as readily have applied the term Bani Isra'il to the Christians, and in fact probably does do so in some passages. For had they not also the Book, which as far as he could learn had been revealed through Moses to the Bani Isra'il? But it was actually with Jews that he had found contact. That when he went to Medina he was still in a mood to learn from them is shown by the fact that he adopted some of their practices, such as the Fast of the 'Āshūra or Day of Atonement. His followers were instructed to pray with their faces towards Jerusalem. He expected no doubt that the Jews would recognise him, or at least give him moral support. But in that he was disappointed.

Towards the end of the Meccan period he had discovered that 'Isa (Jesus) whose wonderful birth he had before related, had also been a prophet to the Bani Isra'il. That may have been a little disconcerting to him. It was not in accordance with his idea that each people had their own prophet and only one. But he had already learned from the story of Moses that the

believing community survived the Catastrophe, and perhaps he was beginning to realise that even a believing community might require to be set right occasionally. The way was open for the recognition that more than one prophet might be sent to the same people. Accordingly we soon find that he is aware that the prophets mentioned in Scripture are connected with one another. They are *dhurriyya*, descendants one from the other. They belong to the same race.

There follows a discovery which combined with other events was fateful. The prophets were all connected with the Book of Moses, and he seems to have assumed that they were all secondary to him. But Moses was not the first of the prophets. He and his people were descendants (*dhurriyya*) of those who were carried in the Ark with Noah (xvii. v. 3 ff.). As showing that Muhammad was by this time getting fairly accurate and detailed information regarding the Torah we may note that this same passage contains what is clearly a reference to Deuteronomy, chap. xxx. : “ *We solemnly declared to the children of Israel in the Book, if ye do well to your own behoof will ye do well, and if ye do evil, it is against yourselves*”. It is further stated that it had been decreed that the Children of Israel should twice do evil in the earth and suffer punishment for it. What these two times were is not quite clear, but as the temple is said to have been entered on both occasions the inference would seem to be that the Exile is one and the sack of Jerusalem by Titus the other. Whether the latter was

already connected in his mind with the rejection of Jesus we cannot say. But certainly that came to be one of the counts in his enmity to the Jews.

That is, however, to anticipate. Having discovered that Moses was subsequent to Noah, he soon makes the important discovery that Abraham had his place in the succession of prophets between Noah and Moses. In vi. v. 84 ff., after recounting the story of Abraham, it goes on: "*We gave to him Isaac and Jacob, each of them We guided, and Noah We had guided before that, and of his seed came David and Solomon and Job and Joseph, and Moses and Aaron—thus do We reward those who do well—and Zachariah and John and Jesus and Ilyas—each, one of the well-doers—and Isma'il and Elyasa' (Elisha), and Jonas and Lot—each, have We given honour over the creatures*". That the names are intended to be in chronological order is not at all likely. The connection of Lot with Abraham must have been known to Muhammad before this. But if he had known the real order of these names he would hardly have made such a jumble of them. In particular the fact that Ishmael is not closely conjoined with Abraham is proof that Muhammad had not, when this passage was revealed, learned of the connection. It soon became of great importance to him. Ishmael was the reputed ancestor of the Arabs, and having discovered that he was the son of Abraham, the prophet of the Arabs knew how to make use of the fact, as well as of the fact that Abraham came in time before Moses. It brought the Arabs and himself into

the race of the people of God, and into the line of descent in which the prophetic office was appointed to be, as is stated in lvii. v. 26 : “ *We sent Noah and Abraham and We appointed the prophetic office and the Book to be among their descendants* ”. The priority of Abraham to Moses and also to Jesus, enabled him at Medina, when his hopes of the Jews failed, to fall back upon a man of God, independent alike of Jews and Christians, whom he can associate with the Ka’ba and the new Arab faith. “ *Do ye say that Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Patriarchs were Jews or Christians? Say : Do ye know best or God?* ” (ii. v. 134). That shows that Muhammad had now certain knowledge that in Scripture Abraham and the others were stated to be prior to both Moses and Jesus, and could not therefore be called followers of either. He has, it may be noted, no room for nationality apart from religion. In the same verse there follows a pretty clear hint that Muhammad was seriously annoyed at this fact having been concealed from him : “ *Who does a greater wrong than he who conceals something revealed from God which is in his possession. God will not be forgetful of what ye do.* ”

Abraham thus takes his place at the head of the list of prophets, a sign that Islam is finally to stand on its own basis and be independent alike of Judaism and Christianity. Muhammad has in fact, after some confusion due to the attempt to fit his imperfect knowledge of Scripture into his real world, arrived at a philosophy of religion something like that from which he

started, but more comprehensive. We find a statement of this in ii. v. 209, which, with interwoven explanations, runs as follows : “ *Mankind was one community (i.e. in Qur’ān language, there was an original pure religion to which all men belonged). God sent the Prophets to bring good tidings and to warn, and he sent with them the Book, in order that it might judge between men in regard to their differences (i.e. again interpreting the Qur’ān language, men had differed, departing from the pure religion, separating and following the worship of various gods,¹ and the prophets were sent to call men back to the pure religion). In regard to it (the Book) no one differed except those to whom it was given after clear proofs had come to them, out of jealousy of each other (Muhammad’s language has by the constant use of set phrases become mixed. This means that those who had received the Book, i.e. Jews and Christians, had differed, i.e. gone apart as separate religious communities, only because of jealousy of each other.) But God by his own permission has guided those who believe (the Moslems) to what of the truth they differed about. God guides whom he wills to the straight path*” (i.e. the underlying truth of both Judaism and Christianity is restored again in Islam).

Abraham and Ishmael were Moslems. They were the predecessors of Islam being associated with Arabia, and being representatives of this pure primitive religion which was eternal (*dīn*

¹ That is the frequent and almost general meaning of the phrase *mā khtalafū fīhi*, “that in which they had differed”, which refers to Paganism and not to disputes among Christians.

qayyim), and ever again renewed, and freed from the corruptions which from time to time crept into it. This is what Muhammad meant by *ḥanīf*. The difficulty of the derivation of this word has already been referred to. The signification which Muhammad attached to it is clear from the passage xxx. v. 29: “*Set thy face as a ḥanīf towards the religion, the creation of God according to which he created man; there is no change in God’s creation; that is the eternal religion (dīn qayyim); but the bulk of men do not know*”. The term *ḥanīf* is associated with Abraham not, I think, because Abraham is regarded as specially a *ḥanīf* more than others, but rather because the recognition of the place of Abraham, and the idea of this eternally existing religion again and again renewed by the prophets, came to Muhammad about the same time. Other prophets and other true believers were *ḥanīfs*.

Thus his final list of preceding prophets comes to be, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus; the first two being sometimes omitted. In one passage (iii. v. 30), tracing the descent of those whom God has chosen to be “over the worlds” he gives the list as Adam, Noah, the family of Abraham, and the family of ‘Imran. Probably the family of ‘Imran is here meant to include both Moses and Jesus. For Muhammad confused Mary (Arabic, *Maryam*), the mother of Jesus with Miryam the sister of Moses, so that ‘Imran would be the father of Moses and the grandfather of Jesus. If that be not so, the verse would have a curious political colour, indicating that

Muhammad had now finished with the Jews, and no longer recognised Moses as one of the great prophets. But what we may call the Prophet's political attitude must be left for another lecture.

LECTURE V

THE ATTITUDE OF THE PROPHET TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY

IN the previous lecture we considered the moulding influence of previous monotheistic religion and especially of the Revelation which he believed to be the basis of it upon Muhammad in the course of his work in Mecca. We found him as the result of that, combined with the course of events, taking up soon after he settled in Medina an independent position as a prophet and head of a religious community or state, such as he believed Moses to have been. It remains to consider in this lecture what was the attitude of this theocratic ruler of a new religious state towards those who had received the Book before him.

His relations with the Jews form part of all biographies of Muhammad, for they worked out to a bitter and savage conclusion in the course of his first few years' residence in Medina. It is not necessary to deal with them here, except in bare outline.¹ We have seen that even after his arrival in Medina he was willing to learn from

¹ There is a special monograph on the subject : A. J. Wensinck, *Mohammed en de Joden te Medina*, Leiden, 1908.

them as from those who already possessed the Book. But this attitude soon changed. The Ka'ba took the place of Jerusalem as the *qibla* or direction of prayer. The Fast of Ramadān was instituted, and the Jewish fast of the Day of Atonement was dropped. Shortly after the Battle of Badr a Jewish tribe, the Bani Qainuqa', were deprived of their goods and expelled from Medina. The Bani Nadir were similarly expelled some two years later, and finally the Bani Quraiza were besieged, and, after capitulation at discretion, their men were slaughtered, their goods confiscated, their women and children enslaved. This bitter hostility was no doubt due to the annoyance which the opposition of the Jews caused him. They seem to have intrigued with his enemies, and to have been at once irritating and faint-hearted. But in Muhammad's mind there also rankled the old feeling that the Jews had misled him in regard to what the Revelation contained, and having discovered that Jesus had been a prophet to the Bani Isra'il whom the Jews had rejected, he may have in his own mind justified his harsh dealing with them by the reflection that they were renegades who had already more than once rejected the Divine message. He accuses them of having slain the prophets. In ii. v. 81, he rates them thus: "*We gave Moses the Book and We caused a succession of prophets to follow after him. And We gave 'Isa b. Maryam the demonstrative signs, and supported him by the Holy Spirit. Did ye not every time a Messenger come to you with a message which ye yourselves did not like, act proudly,*

accusing some of them of falsehood and killing others? ” Now when a new revelation has come confirming what was before it they disbelieve again, and “*the curse of God is upon those who disbelieve*”.

Turning then to his attitude towards Christians, it follows from what has been said in previous lectures that it was practically only after the Hijra that he came into direct relations with them. The development of his political attitude to Christian communities belongs to the Medinan period, and indeed to the later years of that period. His direct knowledge of Christianity was to begin with very limited. He had very little idea of Christian teaching or of what the Christian Church was. In fact, he never did acquire very intimate knowledge of these things. As Nöldeke pointed out long ago, the man who made such a stupid story of the chief Christian sacrament, as that in Surah v. v. 111 ff., one of the latest parts of the Qur’ān, could not have known much about the Christian Church.

But I think it is also implied in what has been said that his attitude towards previous Monotheism was a very receptive one. I use that term because I do not wish to prejudice the question, which cannot be definitely decided, if a strict answer be demanded, whether it was Judaism or Christianity to which Muhammad mainly looked, and from which he borrowed most in the early days of his work. He himself did not at all distinguish between them. All things considered, however, I think it was the great religion which prevailed in the lands round

about Arabia, and especially in Syria and the Roman Empire, which had attracted his attention and which occupied in his untutored mind a position of imposing authority. From it he was prepared to borrow, probably assuming that in the Revelation which it cherished were contained those things which by his own reflection he could not reach, but which were as necessary for the true religion as was the truth of God's creative power and bounty, which he had reached for himself, and upon which that religion was also founded.

This is so far confirmed by the few references which he makes in the Qur'ān to events outside Arabia. In the Qur'ān the religious interest is always dominant, and the local interest centres for long in Mecca. Arabia, as a whole, only comes gradually into the scope of his purpose, and it is only towards the end of his life that anything outside Arabia comes into the centre of what we may call his political interest. So that his references to outside events are very rare. But there are one or two which show that he had a friendly feeling towards the Roman Empire. Surah xxx. begins with the following declaration: "*The Romans have been defeated in the neighbouring part of the world, but they, after their defeat will obtain the victory in a few years. The affair before and after belongs to God. On that day the Believers will rejoice in the help of God. He helpeth whom he will; he is the Mighty, the Merciful.*" That, no doubt, refers to the overrunning of Palestine by the Persians in A.D. 614. It would be easy simply by altering

a few vowel points, which, of course, were not written in those days, to make the passage mean exactly the opposite, and it is possible that it may have been intended by the different pronunciation of one or two words to make the declaration suit whichever way the event fell out. But there is no other example of such an ambiguous oracle in the Qur'ān, and there is no need to suspect that Muhammad intended such a thing here. As it stands the passage shows clearly that his sympathies were with Rome in the struggle with Persia. Again in xxii. v. 41, we find: "*Had not God repelled men some by means of others, verily cloisters and churches and oratories and places of worship in which the name of God is remembered, would have been destroyed, many of them*". The date of this is shortly after the Hijra, when the Prophet is working his people up to war against the Meccans and combating the pacifist tendencies, which he had at one time encouraged. It is impossible that the places of worship referred to should be Moslem. The words used for cloisters and churches designate specially Christian buildings. The argument is really drawn from the Persian invasion of the Roman Empire which by this time had been repelled. If he says in effect the Christians had not fought for their religious buildings the worship of God would have suffered damage. Evidently he still regarded Syria and Palestine as lands in which God was truly worshipped.

It was only about this time, or but very little earlier, that as we have seen Muhammad realised the distinction between Jews and Christians.

He probably assumed that the Jews with whom he had come in contact belonged to the one great revealed religion. He certainly assumed for a time that Moses was the prophet through whom had come the revelation upon which that religion was founded. There is no indication that he knew of Jesus as a prophet in the same sense. It was Moses to whom had been given the Book, and so far he speaks only of the Book, drawing no distinction as he afterwards did between the *Taurāt* and the *Injīl*. The story of the Virgin Mary and that of the Birth of Jesus had indeed been narrated quite early, but simply as amongst the number of the "signs" which at one stage Muhammad collected so diligently.

If we could accept the traditional date of it, Surah xix. would contain the earliest mention of Jesus as one who had received the Book. The first part of that Surah is said by tradition to have been read in presence of the Negus of Abyssinia, when the Meccans sent ambassadors to claim the return of the emigrants who had gone thither to escape from the persecution to which Muhammad's followers were subjected in Mecca. If that be true this part of the Surah is early. But all these traditional dates are suspect. In any case, the Surah has been added to at a later date, and while the stories of Zacharias, John, and the Virgin Mary, with which it begins might possibly belong to that early time, some additions have been made to what is there said about Jesus. That tradition being discarded, it is only when we come to sections that belong to the time shortly before or shortly

after the Hijra that we find Jesus described as having received the Book, and a distinction begins to be made amongst the "people of the Book" (cf. iii. v. 22, "*those who have received part of the Book*"). Then Jesus takes his place alongside Moses as one of the great prophets and the *Injīl* or Evangel which was given to Jesus, takes its place alongside the *Taurāt*, which had been given to Moses.

Of the actual contents of the *Injīl* or New Testament, Muhammad seems never to have gained much knowledge. There are phrases here and there throughout the Qur'ān which remind us of phrases in it, as there are phrases which remind us of phrases in Christian liturgies. Surah i., the Fātiḥa, consists almost entirely of phrases which might be used in Jewish or Christian prayers. But if they are directly borrowed and do not belong to the Judæo-Christian atmosphere diffused in Arabia, they are Jewish rather than Christian. There are fairly frequent references to the Holy Spirit, and it is definitely, though not exclusively, associated with Jesus. It really belongs, however, to the realm of Muhammad's prophetic speculation. It is possible that the introduction of mathals or parables into the Qur'ān may have been suggested by some information as to the existence of the Gospel parables. These have always had more of a separate existence than the parables which occur in the Old Testament. He does not seem, however, to have actually known many of the New Testament parables. They are just the sort of thing one imagines he would have delighted to include in

the Qur'ān had they come to his knowledge. The following passage, however, seems to be made up of Gospel reminiscences : “ *O ye who believe, make not your alms void by reproaches and injury like him who expendeth his substance to be seen of men and believeth not in God and in the Last Day. The likeness of such a one is that of a rock with a thin soil upon it, on which a heavy rain falleth but leaveth it hard. . . . And the likeness of those who expend their substance from a desire to please God and for the stablishing of their souls, is that of a garden on a hill on which the heavy rain falleth and it yieldeth its fruits twofold* ” (ii. v. 266 ff.).¹

There is, however, no evidence of such a desire to learn the contents of the New Testament, as prompted his collection of the prophetic stories of the Old. The needs of his own task did not lead him to that ; and by the time he learned of the separate existence of the *Injil*, he was on the point of setting up as a prophet on his own account independent of those who had preceded him. Such knowledge of Christianity as he acquired after this arose out of his political relations with Christian communities on the borders of Arabia. His account of the Lord's Supper is not founded on the New Testament, but on some vague and badly understood information of this kind which came to him. “ *Remember when the Apostles said : ‘ O Jesus son of Mary is thy Lord able to send down a furnished table to us*

¹ A list of the verbal reminiscences in the Qur'ān from both Old and New Testaments is given by Rudolph, *Die Abhängigkeit des Qorans vom Judentum und Christentum*, p. 10 ff.

out of Heaven?' He said: 'Fear God if ye be believers.' They said: 'We desire to eat therefrom and to have our hearts assured, and to know that thou hast indeed spoken truth to us, and to be witnesses thereof.' Jesus son of Mary said: 'O God our Lord, send down a table to us out of Heaven that it may become a recurring festival to us, to the first of us and to the last of us, and a sign from thee, and do thou nourish us, for thou art the best of nourishers.' God said: 'Verily I will cause it to descend to you, but whoever among you after that shall disbelieve, I will surely chastise him with a chastisement wherewith I will not chastise any other creature'."

Before leaving the subject of the receptive attitude of Muhammad towards previous Monotheism it may be convenient to indicate shortly the influence of Christianity upon the institutions of Islam. This matter, however, requires much more investigation before any reliable treatment of it can be given. It has already been pointed out that the name *qur'ān* adopted for the revelation implies suggestion from the side of Christianity. The same applies to *ṣalāt*, the name for the common prayer or service of which probably the recitation of portions of the *Qur'ān* formed part from the beginning. Observance of it is frequently insisted on in the *Qur'ān*. But the five times of prayer which ultimately became the rule are nowhere mentioned. To begin with only two times of prayer are mentioned, probably morning and evening being meant. In Medina, a third is introduced, *aṣ-ṣalāt al-wuṣṭā* (ii. v. 239), which would probably

fall in the middle of the day. It is certain that to begin with night-vigils and recitation of the Qur'ān were practised. I have suggested that the beginning of Surah lxxiii. may have originally referred to the actual composition of the Qur'ān. But it was made to refer to its nightly recitation. For at the close of the Surah there is a verse, which from its style is manifestly late, specifically introducing a lightening of the burden of these nightly prayers. For vigils of that kind there can, I think, be no doubt that the example of Christian monks and eremites gave the suggestion. This is admitted by Mittwoch¹ while maintaining the paramount influence of Judaism upon the final form of the *ṣalāt*, though he points out that in Jewish sources a special effectiveness is ascribed to nightly prayer and study of the Torah. This, however, is not likely to have been known to Muhammad at the beginning, if it ever was. A verse has already been quoted which shows that he did know and approve of persons who devoted themselves entirely to the service of God. The truth seems to be that the example of Christian monks was followed in the early days in Mecca; that as Muhammad came into closer relations with the Jews, their practice influenced some of the regulations for the *ṣalāt*, and that the night-vigils were ultimately dropped as definite requirements, being thereafter regarded as voluntary works of supererogation.

What concrete action was denoted by the

¹ Mittwoch, "Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des islamischen Gebets u. Kultus" (*Abh. d. k. preuss. Akad. d. Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Klasse, 1913*).

command *sabbih*, "give glory", which occurs in the early portions of the Qur'ān is uncertain. The derivation of the word suggests Christian influence. It may have been an imitation of the Gloria of Christian liturgy.

The *qibla* or fixed direction in prayer was probably Jewish in suggestion. There is a tradition that in Mecca the prophet so placed himself that he faced both the Ka'ba and Jerusalem, but that is a harmonising account. There is really no trace of a *qibla* until he comes into contact with the Jews at Medina. Then he adopted the direction of Jerusalem apparently under the impression that that was the *qibla* of all the people of the Book. He discovered that the fact was otherwise (ii. v. 140). Then, relations with the Jews becoming strained, and having determined to establish Islam on an independent basis, he changed the *qibla* to the direction of the Ka'ba, thus making his community a "middle people" (ii. v. 137), *i.e.* one which avoided following either Jews or Christians in points in which they differed. The same idea may appear in the adoption of Friday as the day of special service instead of either the Jewish or the Christian Sabbath; as also in the adoption of the call to prayer by means of the human voice. Tradition indeed asserts that the use of the wooden clapper by which Christians were summoned to service in the East was suggested to the Prophet, but rejected by him. So also he rejected the trumpet because it was Jewish.

The *Zakāt* shows a similar history to that of the *Ṣalāt*. In Mecca, as we have seen, the word

simply meant almsgiving, and the practice was quite unregulated. In Medina, probably in imitation of the Jewish law of tithes, it became a prescribed tax for the support of the poor of the community.

The Fast of Ramadan was, as we have seen, instituted in recognition of the victory of Badr. The introduction of a prescribed fast of any kind may have been suggested by Jewish practice, for there does not appear to have been any prescribed fast in Meccan days. The manner of fasting—abstinence during the day, with permission to partake of food and drink after sunset—seems to have been the Jewish method of keeping their fast days.¹ In prescribing a month as the length of the fast, he may have chosen a convenient period intermediate between the Jewish ten days of special observance ending in the Day of Atonement, and the six weeks of the Christian season of Lent.

It is unlikely that the influence of Christianity had anything to do with the prohibition of wine. There were indeed Oriental sects, as for instance the Manicheans and the Severians, who forbade its use. But it is unlikely that Muhammad was in contact with them. We should note also that what he forbade was not the native *nabīdh* made from dates, but *khamr*, which was an importation in Arabia, and not a native product at all. Experience in the direction of his own community may have impressed upon him the necessity of laying some restriction upon its use. Thus after

¹ Cf. Oesterley and Box, *Religion and Worship of the Synagogue*, pp. 326, 404.

the battle of Badr some of his followers celebrated the occasion too well. Amongst them was the Prophet's uncle Hamza, the Lion of Islam. By ill-luck 'Ali, the Prophet's cousin and later his son-in-law, who had got two old camels from the spoil of Badr, and thought to make some money by trading with them, brought them round and couched them in the street near the house in which Hamza was making merry. The latter, having his attention drawn to the animals by a singing-girl, rushed out in a state of intoxication and mutilated and killed them. When the Prophet, to whom 'Ali complained, came on the scene to remonstrate, he was received with less than courtesy, and thought it politic to withdraw. The Qur'ân itself (iv. v. 46) contains an admonition not to come to prayers in a state of intoxication, from which we may infer that such conduct had occurred. Things like these may have moved Muhammad, who had at one time acknowledged that while there was harm in the use of wine there were also advantages, finally to forbid its use altogether.

The ceremonies of the Pilgrimage were adopted from pre-Islamic Arab custom, with, of course, such changes as were necessary to free them superficially at least from idolatry. The question of outside influence hardly arises in regard to them. The mass of other legal enactments which the Qur'ân contains form far too large a subject to be dealt with here.¹ A great many of them were evidently suggested by Jewish practice, but

¹ Roberts, *The Social Laws of the Qurân*, London, 1925, may be consulted.

as most of them took shape in Medina, the principle that his community was to be a "middle people" no doubt played a part in causing variations from that. From this digression we must now return to the development of the Prophet's political attitude towards Christians.

During the whole of the Meccan period of his activity Muhammad's attitude towards the people of the Book, which must be taken as including both Jews and Christians so far as known to him, was consistently friendly. Even in Medina, when he had adopted a more independent attitude, he seems at first merely to have thought of establishing his own community on an equal footing with them. "*O People of the Book, come to a word fair between us and you, that we worship God only and associate nothing with him, and do not take each other as lords to the exclusion of God*" (iii. v. 57). This is probably addressed specially to the Jews, but there is nothing to indicate that Christians would have been excluded from the invitation had they been in the Prophet's mind. The declaration offers an apparently equal alliance. It is to be noticed, however, that God is to be alone Lord, and Muhammad would probably, in case of dispute, have claimed that he was the mouthpiece of God upon earth.

When his references to distinct Christian communities do begin to occur they are friendly. Thus in ii. v. 59 we find a declaration which is detached from the context, and which occurs elsewhere in the same detached way, as if it were a loose deliverance the exact position of which was not known: "*Those who have believed, the*

Jews, the Naṣārā and the Ṣābi'īn, whoever believes in God, and the Last Day, and acts uprightly, have their reward with their Lord. There is no fear upon them, neither do they grieve." That is again an attempt to find a common basis amongst Monotheists. Belief in God and in the Last Day, and uprightness of life, are the common requirements. Those who fulfil these conditions, to whatever denomination they belong, are sure of their reward. They do not stand in fear of future punishment.

It is interesting to look at the denominations here mentioned. Concerning the *Ṣābi'īn* I have already spoken. I shall only repeat here that it seems to me, after all we have learned of the difficulty Muhammad had in acquiring his meagre information about Christians, extremely improbable that he knew anything about an obscure sect of that name. Surah xxxiv. v. 19 seems to imply that he knew that there were "believers" in Sabā' or South Arabia, and one jumps to the conclusion that he here refers to them. The objections to this assumption have already been indicated. They are only partly removed by the observation that as he makes play with the names of the other parties, so he may have played with the name Sabā'.

The first class mentioned in the above declaration, *alladhīna āmanū*, "those who have believed", is not, as it is sometimes taken to be, an inclusive epithet descriptive of the other classes, but is a standing denotation of Muhammad's own followers. The classes which follow are put on the same footing as them.

The Jews are denoted by the curious phrase *alladhīna hādū*, which we might translate by "those who have repented". Whether the phrase was meant to have any such connotation, cannot be determined. But in any case the word *hādū* is primarily a play upon the word for Jew, *Yahūd*. This, in Arabic, has the form of the imperfect tense of a verb, of which Muhammad takes the perfect tense and combines it with the relative pronoun. The resulting phrase he then uses frequently in the Qur'ān as a designation of the Jews. Possibly there was no motive behind this, except that he felt that a cryptic reference of that kind was more suitable to Qur'ān style. In composing prayers we ourselves prefer a circumlocution to the direct use of a proper name.

If we could be sure that *Ṣābi'in* denoted the Christians of South Arabia, *Naṣārā* would then denote specially those of the north. But we shall not in any case go far wrong in taking it as meant to denote Christians in general. The word *Naṣārā* is apparently derived from *Nazaraioi*, which is mentioned as the name of a Jewish-Christian sect. It has, however, become the usual name for Christians in Arabic, and as such was in use amongst the Arabs before Muhammad's time, so that we are not compelled to look for any such special sect existing in his day. As illustrating how Muhammad played with these names and sought to give them Arabic form and sense, as he did with *Yahūd*, there are two passages, worth looking at, which at the same time show him looking with considerable favour upon the *Naṣārā*. In iii. v. 45 we read: "*And when Jesus*

perceived unbelief on their part he said, 'Who are my helpers for God's sake?' The Apostles replied: 'We are God's helpers; we have believed and we testify that we are Moslems'": and in lxi. v. 14: "O ye who have believed (i.e. Muhammad's followers), be helpers of God; as Jesus son of Maryam said to the Apostles, 'Who are my helpers for God's sake?' And the Apostles said: 'We are God's helpers'. So part of the Bani Isra'il believed and part disbelieved. So we assisted those who believed against their enemies, and they appeared as conquerors." Muhammad sees in the experience of Jesus a type of his own. Some of the Bani Isra'il believed and some not. It would seem to follow logically that the Jews were the unbelieving part of the Bani Isra'il. The Naṣārā are the *Anṣār Allāh* (helpers of God), just as the people of Medina who supported Muhammad were called the *Anṣār*. It is not necessary to assume that he knew of Christians so called. He is simply Arabicising the name Naṣārā.

When these verses were composed it seems evident that Muhammad had ceased to look with favour upon the Jews, but still regarded the Naṣārā as hopeful. How completely in course of time he swung round from the Jews to the Christians is shown by v. v. 85: "Thou wilt find that the most hostile of men towards those who have believed are the Jews, and the Polytheists, and the most favourable towards those who have believed are those who say, 'We are Naṣārā'. That is because there are amongst them priests and monks, and because they are not proud." They are assigned a place in Paradise.

A less positive attitude is shown in xxii. v. 17 when he details the various classes of men and says: “*God will distinguish on the Resurrection Day between those who have believed (the Moslems), those who have ‘repented’ (the Jews), the Ṣābi’īn, the Naṣārā, the Māgi, and those who ascribe partners to God (the Pagan Polytheists)*”. The phrase is a common one, equivalent to something like “the unbelievers will see on the Judgement Day who has been right”. But where exactly the distinction will fall is not quite clear. My own impression is that Moslems, Jews, Ṣābi’īn, Naṣārā, and Māgi will, in Muhammad’s opinion, be on one side of the line, and the idolaters on the other.

But when Muhammad’s power began to spread in Arabia his attitude towards the Christians soon began to cool. Any real alliance or even peaceful accommodation was indeed impossible from the first. Muhammad complains (ii. v. 114) that neither Jews nor Christians will be satisfied with him until he follows their *milla* or type of religion. It was just as impossible for him to make concessions. I have pointed out that probably from the first Muhammad contemplated a revived religious community centring in Mecca. At any rate the political complexion of his religion did not originate in Medina. From the time when it became clear to him that prophets and their followers survived the calamity which they predicted, and that it would be part of the work of a prophet, like Moses for instance, to form a people according to God’s law, this entered into his conception. If we examine carefully his

stories of the prophets delivered in the Meccan period, we shall notice how often there occurs, in the appeals of the prophets, the phrase "Obey God and obey me". If we can read out of these stories indications of what was the situation in Mecca, we shall find hints also that the Prophet's opponents felt that his call to Islam implied a claim to obedience to himself. That was never really absent from his demands, and was in fact implied at any rate in his later conception of the position of a prophet. He was God's mouthpiece upon earth and the agent of His incontrovertible will. The demand for absolute obedience finds expression in viii. v. 24 (probably shortly after Badr): "*O ye who have believed, respond to God and his Apostle when he calls to that which giveth you life. Know that God cometh between a man and his own heart.*"

When, therefore, Muhammad came to close quarters with Christians it was bound to go with them as it had gone with the Jews. He might recognise Jesus as a prophet—as the greatest of previous prophets. He did that. But differences between the beliefs and practices of the Christians of that day, and the cardinal doctrines and practices which he inculcated, were bound to appear, some of which Muhammad could not accept or approve: and Christians, however far they might approve of some of his teachings, could not accept him as the present-day mouthpiece of God on earth whom it was their present duty absolutely to obey. Differences soon began to appear.

Monasticism he had probably known of from

the first, and probably he approved of it. Any disapproval of it which he expresses, amounts merely to the declaration that it is not prescribed : “ *We sent Noah and Abraham and appointed the prophetic office and the Book to be in the line of their descendants. Some of them were guided aright, though many were evil-doers. Then We caused our messengers to follow in their footsteps and We caused Jesus son of Maryam to follow them,¹ and gave to him the Gospel : and set in the hearts of those who followed him kindness and mercy, and monasticism (rahbāniyya) which they introduced for themselves, We not having prescribed it for them, except (as a means of) seeking the favour of God. They did not, however, manage it aright. Those of them who believed We gave their reward, but many of them were evil-doers* ” (lvii. v. 26 f.).

Muhammad had already given an apocryphal account of the birth of Jesus, which, however, would hardly have been a stumbling-block to contemporary Christians. But while rating the Jews he stumbles upon an account of the death of Jesus which Christians of that time could not have accepted. “ *For their not fulfilling their covenant, for their unbelief in the signs of God, for their slaying the prophets unjustly, for their saying, ‘ Our hearts are uncircumcised ’—nay, God hath put a seal upon them for their unbelief, and they do not believe except a little—and for their unbelief in speaking against Maryam a grievous scandal : and in saying, ‘ We have killed the Messiah Jesus son of Maryam, the messenger of God.’ They did not kill him and did not crucify him, but he was*

¹ It may be noted that Moses is not now mentioned specially.

counterfeited to them. Those who differ in regard to him are in doubt for that reason. They have no knowledge thereof beyond following their own opinion. They did not kill him certainly. Nay, God exalted him to himself. God was mighty and wise. There shall not be any of the people of the Book but shall believe in him before his death” (iv. v. 154 ff.).

This idea of a substitute for Jesus having been crucified in place of Him is not unknown in Christian speculation. We find it both in Ebionitic and Gnostic sects. Rösch¹ finds here the mythic precipitation of the Cerinthian heresy and the Nestorian separation of the two natures in Christ: the higher Christ being exalted to heaven and the man Jesus being crucified. That may be so. But Muhammad's own originality may have worked upon very slender information. According to his theory, so often expressed in the stories of the prophets, they were always delivered from the Catastrophe. Jesus, had He actually been crucified by His enemies, would have been the only exception. Add to this that he had learned that Christians believed in a living Christ exalted at the right hand of God, and that before the end all God's people would be brought to know Him. In that, I think, we have sufficient to generate in Muhammad's mind the account which he gives, without attributing to him any intimate knowledge of Christian speculation or supposing him to have been influenced by obscure sects which he otherwise shows no knowledge of. Whether “those who differ in regard to him”

¹ “Jesusmythen des Islam”, *Theolog. Studien und Kritiken*, 1876, i. p. 451.

denotes the various parties to the Christological disputes within Christendom, is doubtful. It may simply refer to the great difference which had impressed Muhammad, viz. that between Jews and Christians.

Muhammad does indeed seem to know of hostile sects of Christians. In v. v. 17 we find the following reference to the Christians: "*Of those who call themselves Naṣārā We took a covenant. But they forgot a part of what they were taught, wherefore We have stirred up enmity and hatred amongst them till the Day of Resurrection.*" That looks like a reference to the mutual hatred of Christian sects. But in the same Surah, v. 69, almost the same words are used of the Jews: "*That which has been sent down to thee from thy Lord will surely increase the rebellion and unbelief of many of them, and We have put enmity and hatred amongst them until the Day of Resurrection*". A little further on, v. 93, his own followers are thus warned: "*Satan wishes to cast enmity and hatred amongst you in the matter of wine and games of chance, and to turn you aside from the remembrance of God and from prayer*". The enmity spoken of in all these verses is not that between different sects of Christians, Jews, or Muhammadans, but moral perversity and enmity towards God (cf. v. 72). That enmity he recognises will be permanent; in other words, the Christians with whom his power in Arabia was now coming into collision would not accept Islam, or recognise him as the prophet of the Arabs. An injunction which had been issued probably shortly after the battle of Uḥud, forbidding believers to

form intimate friendships outside their own body (iii. v. 114), is now modified so as to apply specifically not only to Jews but to Christians: "*O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and Christians as friends; they are friends of each other, and those of you who take them as friends belong to them; God does not guide the people who do wrong*" (v. v. 56). This is a verse which has caused much political difficulty, because it has always been in the background of relations between Moslem and Christian peoples.

As he had before accused the Jews, so now also he accuses the Christians of corrupting and concealing their Scriptures. This remains a commonplace of Moslem controversy with Christians, and in modern times considerable play is made with the results of our own Higher Criticism. Nothing of that sort, it goes almost without saying, was in Muhammad's mind. Partly the charge refers to the concealment of a supposed prophecy of his own coming. In lxi. v. 6, a passage the genuineness of which has indeed been questioned, he had claimed that he was foretold by Jesus: "*When Jesus son of Maryam said: 'O Children of Israel, see I am a messenger of God to you confirming the Torah which is already before me, and bringing you good tidings of a messenger who will come after me whose name is Ahmad'*". There seems to be here a reminiscence of the passage of St. John's gospel, where the Holy Spirit is promised. It has long been suspected that the name *Ahmad*, Praised, rests on a confusion between *paraklētōs*, "comforter", and *periklutos*, "famous". The confusion, however,

is not likely to have been made by Muhammad himself. It must have come to him in the information he received.

Whether that confusion was actually made or not, it was part of Muhammad's preconceived idea that the previous Scriptures, being prophecies of the future, must have contained references to his own coming, and if Christians would not admit it, they must be concealing something that was in the Book revealed to them.

But the real gravamen of the charge is that the Christians have altered the teaching delivered to them. Muhammad still clings to the idea that the message of the *Taurāt* and the *Injīl* must have been the same as his own. When he discovered that in essential respects the beliefs of Christians differed from his teaching, it followed that they must have corrupted the Evangel. If they would hold to the message originally delivered to them, God would be gracious to them. "*O people of the Book, you have no ground to stand upon until you establish the Torah and the Evangel*" (v. v. 72). "*If the people of the Book would believe and fear (God), We would cover their evil deeds and cause them to enter the Gardens of Delight. If they would establish the Torah and the Evangel and what has been sent down to them from their Lord, they might eat of what is above them and of what is underneath their feet.¹ A community of them act aright but many are evil in what they do*" (v. v. 70). Who are meant by the community

¹ The food restrictions of the Jewish law, compared with the greater freedom allowed by himself, were represented by Muhammad as being due to God's anger against the Jews.

who act aright is uncertain. It is possible that it might refer to Nestorian Christians, with whom Muhammad may still have hoped to find sympathy. I think it much more likely, however, that the phrase simply means that some Arab Christians were prepared to accept Islam.

The great faults which Muhammad has to lay to the charge against the Christians lie in the doctrine of the Trinity and in that of the divinity of Jesus Christ. It is perhaps unfortunate that the Christian communities with which he actually came into contact were Monophysites who unduly ignored the humanity of Jesus. But I do not think it made much difference to the ultimate result. He would probably have had as little patience with the Nestorians, and have understood the doctrines as presented by them as little, if they had stood in his way. As he understood these two doctrines they were sheer unbelief. "*Verily they are guilty of unbelief who say: 'God is the Messiah son of Maryam'.*" (Whether the inversion has any significance it is impossible to say.) "*The Messiah said: 'O Children of Israel, worship God, my Lord and your Lord. Whoever associates anything with God, God has forbidden him the Garden, and his dwelling is the Fire.'*" (This is simply Muhammad's own conception of what the Messiah must have said.) "*Verily they are guilty of unbelief who say: 'God is one of three'. There is no God but one God. If they do not desist from what they say, a terrible punishment will affect those of them who are guilty of unbelief. . . . The Messiah son of Maryam was only a messenger whom other messengers had pre-*

ceded; and his mother was an upright woman. They ate food (like other human beings). See how we make clear to you the signs, and see how they lie" (v. v. 76 ff.).

Thus the relationship with the Christians ended as that with the Jews had ended—in war. "*Fight against those who do not believe in God, nor in the Last Day, do not forbid what God and his Apostle forbid, nor practise the true religion, from among those who have been given the Book, until they pay the Jizya out of hand, being submissive. The Jews say that Uzair (Ezra) is the Son of God,¹ and the Naṣārā say that the Messiah is the Son of God. That is the saying of their mouths, imitating the saying of those who disbelieved before. God fight against them! How they are deceived! They have taken their aḥbār (Jewish learned men) and their monks as lords to the exclusion of God, and the Messiah.² They were commanded only to worship one God than whom there is no other. Glorious be he beyond what they associate with him*" (ix. v. 29 ff.). The latter part of the quotation might be taken as a reference to saint-worship. But it is more probable, I think, that the meaning is that they obey their ecclesiastical superiors who have led them astray from the true religion, and refuse to obey the Prophet who now in God's name puts the true religion before them. This sense is confirmed by what follows. "*They wish to extinguish God's light by their mouths. But God refuses to do anything but perfect his light*

¹ A curious statement, which perhaps had no foundation but Muhammad's assumption that it must be so.

² According to the vocalisation, "Messiah" is object to "taken", not in apposition with "God".

even though the unbelievers abhor it. He it is who hath sent his messenger with the guidance and the true religion, that he may make it victorious over all (other) religion, though the Polytheists abhor it” (ix. vv. 32 f.).

The monks, upon whom Muhammad had at one time looked with considerable favour, are now denounced—some of them at least—as worldly oppressors, he having no doubt come up against them as heads or bishops of Christian communities. “*O ye who believe, many of the aḥbār and the monks consume the property of the people in vanity, and turn them from the way of God. Those who treasure up gold and silver and do not expend it in the way of God—give them good tidings of terrible punishment”* (ix. v. 34).

We know that before the end of his life Muhammad was in conflict with Christian populations in the north of Arabia, and even within the confines of the Roman Empire. What would have happened if he had lived we do not know. But probably the policy which Abu Bakr carried on was the policy of Muhammad himself. There could have been no real compromise. He regarded himself as the vicegerent of God upon earth. The true religion could only be Islam as he laid it down, and acceptance of it meant acceptance of his divinely inspired authority. The example of Moses had implanted in his mind the idea of a conquering religious people. The Hijra and the execution of the Divine vengeance upon the unbelievers of Mecca had given the immediate occasion for the organisation of such a warlike community. The victory of Badr had confirmed

it. This was what it had grown to, a menace to whatever came in its way. Muhammad could bide his time, but he was not the man to depart from a project which had once taken hold of his mind as involved in his prophetic mission and authority. He might look with favour upon much in Christianity, but unless Christians were prepared to accept his dictation as to what the true religion was, conflict was inevitable, and there could have been no real peace while he lived.

LECTURE VI

THE CHRISTIAN POPULATIONS AT THE ARAB CONQUEST

WE have seen that before the end of his life Muhammad was already in conflict with the Christians within and on the borders of Arabia. This attitude had been justified in the Qur'ān by reference to their saying that "the Messiah, son of Maryam, was God", and that "God was one of three". These statements had been declared to be equivalent to "unbelief". According to tradition also he had several years before his death written to the Emperors of Rome and Persia, to the Negus of Abyssinia, and to the Muqauqas of Egypt demanding their acceptance of Islam. These letters (which have been preserved) are of very doubtful genuineness and the stories told regarding their reception by those to whom they were addressed are manifest fables. It is doubtful if Muhammad ever contemplated a world-wide war of conquest, though he was logically being led to it by the principle of the theocratic state and of the supremacy of the religion of Islam.

After his death events moved with marvellous rapidity. For the moment it looked as if the

Islamic state centred in Medina had come to an end, even in Arabia, but by the steadfastness of the Caliph Abu Bakr, backed by the religious enthusiasm of at least a nucleus of the Medinan community and by the marvellous ability which others, mainly Meccans, displayed as generals and diplomatists—caravanning merchants turned soldier statesmen—the defection of Arabia was overcome, and the Arabs united under the banner of Islam poured out to North-West and North-East, invading both the Roman and the Persian Empires. The latter they soon overran entirely; the former they deprived of Syria and Egypt, and in course of time the whole of North Africa and Spain. They even crossed the Pyrenees into France, and their progress was only stayed by Charles Martel's great victory at Tours, by rebellion in North Africa, and by the internal troubles of the already overgrown empire. In the east, Constantinople, which had been attacked before fifty years had elapsed from the Hijra, held firm, and for centuries remained the bulwark against Islam. It was only taken by the Turks after it had been fatally weakened by the mis-directed crusading enthusiasm of the West.

The course of these events it is not my purpose here to trace, nor do I mean to discuss at any length the causes which prepared the way for such an astonishing collapse of more or less civilised empires before the onset of a people who had hitherto played little or no part in world history. These have been already to some extent indicated. Both the Persian and the Roman Empires had been weakened by internal troubles.

They were just at the moment exhausted by a long-continued struggle against each other. Heraclius, the Roman Emperor, was busy during the last years of Muhammad's life in restoring his recovered provinces, Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia, which had been overrun by the Persians some years before. He was occupied with large schemes for the settlement of Church affairs and the reunion of Christendom. He and those about him evidently realised that the opposition of the Monophysites, who included the bulk of the Arab Christians, to the Chalcedonian formula and the bitter hostility of parties within the Church, weakened the stability of the Empire which he had recovered. But there is no reason to suppose that he realised the danger which threatened from Arabia. In 629 he was in Jerusalem restoring to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre the true Cross which had been recovered from the Persians. The fact of his presence there and the large numbers of Roman soldiers then in Palestine may help to account for the defeat of the Moslem army at Muta in that year. Heraclius' stay in Jerusalem was stained by one of the few blots upon his memory—a massacre of the Jews. He had given them a promise of security; but when he arrived at Jerusalem, representations were made to him that they had sided with the Persians and had displayed a cruel hostility to the Christians. His better nature was overruled and he banished them from the city. This seems to have been followed by a violent persecution. The Jews had no cause to love Muhammad, but their feelings towards

the Christians had always been hostile, and this new persecution caused them, when the real struggle came, to throw their weight on the side of the Arabs, to whom it is said they acted as guides through the country.

Heraclius' dreams of a reunited Christendom were destined to prove equally disastrous. The new movement for the reconciliation of parties was based upon a formula of compromise devised by Sergius, Patriarch of Constantinople, by which the dispute as to the two natures of Christ was to be dropped out of sight and emphasis to be laid upon the one will or energy (Monothelitism). At first the compromise seemed to offer the prospect of brilliant results, but in a short while it began to appear that it was not acceptable to the Church as a whole. Sophronius exerted himself against it, interviewing both Sergius and Heraclius, and endeavouring to dissuade them from introducing it. The Monophysites especially refused to accept it. In Egypt the situation was aggravated by the action of Cyrus, whom Heraclius had appointed Patriarch of Alexandria. Finding the Monothelite compromise unacceptable to the native Egyptian Church, he endeavoured to procure its acceptance by force, and his tenure of power was marked by a severe persecution directed against the Copts, which sapped still more their allegiance to the Roman Empire. Something similar seems to have happened in Syria. The supporters of the Chalcedonian formula had suffered most severely at the time of the Persian conquest of the country. The churches had fallen into the hands of the Mono-

physites. Heraclius' victory over the Persian Empire had again turned the scale in favour of the orthodox. The Monophysites were deprived both of the churches they had acquired and of their own. Bitter feelings prevailed. The Monothelite compromise put forward by the Emperor did not heal the breach. Probably hoping to conciliate Sophronius, the Emperor appointed him Patriarch of Jerusalem. But Sophronius refused to be bought, and continued to oppose the Monothelite doctrine. Again the Emperor was driven to persecution in order to carry out his scheme of a reunited Church. The statement of Abu l-Faraj (Bar Hebræus) gives the judgement of a Monophysite of much later date, but probably reflects something of the feelings which prevailed at the time. "When our people complained to Heraclius", he says, "he gave no answer. Therefore the God of vengeance delivered us out of the hands of Romans by means of the Arabs. Then although our churches were not restored to us since under Arab rule each Christian community retained its actual possessions, still it profited us not a little to be saved from the cruelty of the Romans and their bitter hatred towards us."¹ Add to this that a large number of the Monophysites of Syria and the neighbouring territory were Arabs by race, and we will not expect their opposition to the Arab advance to have been very whole-hearted.

That it was sometimes less than half-hearted, there are many indications. Butler defends the

¹ B. H., *Chron. Eccles.* 274 (quoted by Butler, *Arab Conquest of Egypt*, p. 158).

Copts of Egypt from the charge of having actively aided the Arab invaders in that country, and lays the blame of the surrender largely upon Cyrus the Patriarch, whom he identifies with the Muqauqas of Moslem tradition. But he does so by pointing out that they had been reduced by Cyrus's persecution to a condition in which they were incapable of independent action and could only watch events with a gloomy apathy. Something of the same feelings must have prevailed in Syria. The impression one derives from the accounts of the conquests of the various towns (given, for instance, by Balādhurī) is that the resistance of the general population was not very great. Emesa (Hims), for instance, seems to have capitulated practically without a struggle. This indeed was after resistance had been discouraged by the failure of Heraclius and the success of the Moslems in the field, but before the great battle of the Yarmuk had finally decided the fate of Syria. Damascus also fell early in the struggle. Accounts differ as to what actually happened, but they mostly agree that a Christian bishop (or perhaps the abbot of a monastery) played a part in it. The most circumstantial and probable story is as follows:¹ After the battle of Marj aṣ-Ṣuffar, the suburbs of Damascus were taken by storm. The people retired within the walls and the city itself was invested. Khālid b. al-Walīd, the commander-in-chief (or at any rate one of the commanders, for there is some doubt as to his actual position at this time) of the Moslem army took up his residence in a

¹ Balādhurī, *Futuḥ al-Buldān* (Cairo ed., 1900), p. 127 f.

monastery near the eastern gate. The bishop, who had apparently had dealings with Khālid in arranging the encampment, was in the habit of taking his stand upon the wall, and communications sometimes passed between him and the Moslem chief. One day he said to him, "O Abu Sulaiman, your affair is progressing and I have a promise from you. Come to an understanding with me about this city." So Khālid called for an ink-bottle and parchment and wrote: "In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful: This is what Khālid b. al-Walid grants to the people of Damascus: when he enters it he will give them security for their lives and goods and churches. The wall of the city will not be destroyed and none of their houses will be occupied. For this they have the covenant of God, the pledge of the Apostle of God and of the Caliphs and the Believers. No molestation will be offered them if they pay the *Jizya*."

Al-Waqidi, who wrote in the second century of Islam, says he had actually seen this document, and gives an explanation why the date of it is some months later than the actual taking of Damascus. It was first written without date. But later the bishop got it renewed, and the signatures of the other Moslem generals appended to it. There seems no reason to doubt this. The city, of course, was not in the bishop's (or abbot's) hands to surrender. There was a garrison of Roman troops in it. His part in the bargain seems to have been to convey to the Moslem commander information as to a suitable opportunity for assault. This he did, informing

him of a festival night, and that a certain gate was entirely unguarded. With the assistance of the people of the monastery Khālid procured ladders, climbed the wall, captured, and opened this gate practically without a blow. Abu Ubaida, the other Moslem general, to whom also we may suppose the information had been conveyed, had a severe fight with Roman soldiers at the gate which he assaulted. But when the city was in Moslem possession he agreed to the conditions which Khālid had granted for the case of capitulation. This he would hardly have done if, as other accounts aver, he had forced the Jabian gate, independently of the bishop's information, and the bishop's agreement with Khālid had been made in consequence of the city being thus placed practically at the mercy of the Moslems. It is agreed that the city of Damascus was regarded as having been taken by capitulation, while the suburbs were regarded as a prize of war, and therefore unconditionally at the disposal of the Moslems.

On the whole, the conditions of the capitulation seem to have been observed. Some of the houses of Damascus were occupied by the Moslems, but the explanation is given that a proportion of the inhabitants left the city and joined Heraclius at Antioch and that the houses were thus left vacant.

The story of the Church of St. John is well known. The Moslem mosque was close beside it. Whether a part of the church was so used, is not certain. We do not hear of any complaint of the Christians as to any encroachment to begin

with. But the Omayyad Caliphs cast envious eyes upon it, no doubt wishing space on which to erect a mosque worthy of their capital city. They offered to buy it, and put up large sums of money, but the Christians refused. Finally Walid (who succeeded to the Caliphate in 86 A.H.) became irritated at one of the consultations that took place, and with his own hand commenced its demolition. The church was then by the Caliph's order (perhaps only partially) demolished. In any case it was included in the great Mosque. This, however, was not the end of the story. The Christians complained, and when Omar b. Abd al-'Aziz came to the throne he heard their complaints. His judgement was that if this was one of the fifteen churches which were included in their agreement no one had any right to touch it. He therefore gave orders that it should be restored to them. To this, however, Moslems now objected. Moslem services had actually been held in it, and their religious feelings were offended that it should become a church again. At length a compromise was arrived at. The Moslems offered and the Christians agreed to accept the churches of the suburbs, in lieu of the Church of St. John. The Caliph confirmed this agreement, and the affair was settled.

This illustrates the tolerably amicable relations which prevailed between the two religions in the first century of Islam. It also corroborates the fact with which we are immediately concerned, that the city of Damascus was surrendered by capitulation, and we may, I think, assume that the part said to have been played by a Christian

bishop (or some such official) is correct. It seems fairly evident that the bulk of the Christian population was not enthusiastic in defence of Roman rule.

The terms given to Damascus seem to have become the model of the arrangements which were made with other places in Palestine and Syria. Damascus had surrendered in the year 14 of the Hijra. In the year 16 Jerusalem was still being besieged by 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ when Abu Ubaida arrived to take command. Shortly after the people communicated with him asking to be accepted on the same terms as other cities of Syria, but seeking the further guarantee that the Caliph (Omar) himself should personally accept their capitulation and guarantee the conditions. This also was granted, and Omar came personally to Jerusalem, executed the capitulation and signed it—in the year 17 A.H.¹

If we turn to Mesopotamia we find that much the same thing happened. Edessa, that great centre of Christianity which the Arabs called Rahā, and the Turks Urfa, capitulated on the following conditions. Their temple (cathedral) and its surroundings was to remain their property : they were not to build any new churches beyond those that they already had, and were to render assistance to the Moslems against their enemies.²

With regard to the town of Raqqa we have a fuller narrative.³ The Moslems raided the country and drove the people within the walls. The town made resistance, and the Moslems,

¹ Balādhuri, *op. cit.* p. 145.

² *Ib.* p. 179.

³ *Ib.* p. 180 f.

having encamped within range, suffered some casualties. 'Iyād b. Ghanam, the commander, withdrew out of range, posted watching parties before the gates, and sent out parties to harry the countryside, who brought in prisoners and a plentiful supply of provisions, for the crops were ready for harvesting at the time. After five or six days of this, the commander of the town sent to 'Iyād offering to treat. 'Iyād's letter of security, like that of Khālid to Damascus, is reported :

“ In the name of God the Merciful and Compassionate. This is what 'Iyād b. Ghanam grants to ar-Raqqā on the day on which he enters it.

“ He grants them security for themselves, their goods and their churches, which will not be destroyed or occupied if they pay the *Jizya* which is due from them, and do not make any new treacherous uprising : on condition also that they do not build any new church or place of worship, and do not use publicly any bell or Easter celebration or cross. God is witness and in Him is sufficiency as witness.”

In Iraq similar things seem to have happened. The general population apparently made no very strenuous resistance. The Moslems, having gained a success over the Persian forces, found the cities in the neighbourhood ready to treat, and the people prepared to make alliance with them. As an example we may take the case of Hira, which we have seen was a strong centre of Christianity in pre-Islamic days. It was amongst the first places of any importance outside Arabia to fall into Moslem hands. As in the case of all these

early victories accounts are rather confused, the later accounts tending to represent as a definite Moslem Campaign directed from Medina what really began as an Arab raid across the Persian (or Roman) frontier. But in any case Muthanna, who first began the campaign in Iraq, took care to have the authority of Medina behind him, and was soon supported by the great and dreaded Moslem general, Khālid b. al-Walid. There are hints in our accounts that Hīra had really been taken by Muthanna, but it is generally put down to the credit of Khālid. The latter is reported to have defeated the Persian forces which were then in the neighbourhood at a place called "the meetings of the rivers".¹ A deputation from Hīra then approached him. It is reported that the Persian governor was one of them, and another bore the name of 'Abd al-Masih, which would indicate that he was a Christian. Khālid made a treaty with them on condition that they should pay 100,000 dirhams in the year; that they should be "eyes" (*i.e.* guides and informers) to the Moslems against the people of Persia, and that neither church nor castle of theirs should be destroyed. A similar treaty had previously been made with the people of Ullais. They were to be eyes, *i.e.* guides and helpers, to the Moslems against the Persians. That such a condition should have been accepted does not argue very strenuous loyalty to an empire which had so far only sustained some frontier defeats, and which might be expected to gather its strength (as it afterwards did) for a great conflict. But, indeed,

¹ Balādhuri, *op. cit.* p. 251.

the Christians within the Persian Empire had no great cause for strenuous loyalty. They had suffered terrible persecutions, and though in late times they had enjoyed more or less quiet, they lived always pretty much on sufferance.

It may be questioned, too, whether these conquered populations were really placed in a very much worse position by passing under Arab rule. Some temporary loss by pillage and plunder they undoubtedly suffered. That would affect chiefly the rural populations. The inhabitants of towns, surrendering, as we have seen, chiefly by capitulation, generally managed to secure immunity for their houses and goods as well as for their lives and those of their children. But the population at any rate of Mesopotamia and even of Iraq and Syria had in the frequent and long-continued wars between the rival empires grown in a manner accustomed to such vicissitudes of war.

It would require investigations of a detailed kind, which lie apart from my main purpose, to discover how the annual payments imposed by the Moslems compared in amount with the contributions made by various districts and towns to the Roman or Persian Empire. That is a subject for which materials for investigation seem to exist, but which so far has not been very thoroughly worked out. Suffice it to say here that probably they were not much if any heavier in amount. In the hurry of such rapid conquest the Moslems cannot have narrowly considered what each district could contribute, and must have been very largely dependent upon the

information supplied by those who capitulated to them. The offers made by the capitulating population would, one might expect, be based upon the taxes they were already paying. Evidently the Moslems when they had leisure thought they were too low, and they were sometimes increased. The financial organisation of their extensive conquests also required time. Probably they simply took over the organisation which had previously existed. In any case the finances were conducted for many years after the conquest by Greek (Christian), Jewish, and Persian officials, and in the Greek and Persian languages respectively. It was not until the reign of Abd al-Malik and the governorship of the dreaded Hajjāj in Iraq that the change to Arabic was made.

I have said that the exactions from the provinces were in some cases afterwards increased. That, of course, was not possible where capitulation had been made on the basis of a stated annual payment. Theoretically, at any rate, that was unalterable, though the rapacity of provincial governors probably led to uncovenanted exactions even there. Such things happened even in the Roman Empire. But theoretically the capitulation treaties remained inviolable. We have already seen in the case of the Church of St. John at Damascus both how encroachments tended to be made, and how by appealing to the treaty the Christians could hope for redress. But for the most part these capitulation treaties only applied to the towns. The Arab armies raided the country, the inhabitants

fled into the towns, and the towns afterwards capitulated. That seems to have been the normal course of events. The Arabs, therefore, claimed to have taken the land by force. Theoretically on the basis of the Qur'ān and the Prophet's example that was "booty" (*ghanīma*), and fell to be divided amongst the Moslems taking part in the expedition, after a fifth part had been assigned as the share of the State. The theory, however, was not strictly carried out. The land was not as a rule divided amongst the Moslems, but remained in the hands of the previous cultivators on condition of payment of an annual sum to the State. This revenue was then, according to the arrangement of the Caliph Omar, used to pay fixed pensions to the Moslem soldiers. What Balādhurī (p. 180) reports regarding Raqqa is probably typical. 'Iyād b. Ghanam made, as we have already noted, a treaty of capitulation with the town. But he said, "The land belongs to us, we have set foot on it and secured it". He left it, however, undisturbed in their hand on condition of the payment of the *Kharāj* (tax on the produce of the land). That part of it which he did not restore to the people of the Covenant (*i.e.* the Christian population), and which they renounced, he assigned to the Moslems on condition of payment of a tenth (*i.e.* *Sadaqa* or *Zakāt*, which all Moslems were required by the Qur'ān to pay). He also laid the *Jizya* upon them, imposing upon each man a *dīnār* per annum, women and children being exempt. Along with the *dīnār* he imposed upon them an annual payment of a measure of wheat, some olive oil,

raiment, and honey. (These latter exactions, we may note, had also their prototype in the Roman system of taxation.)

Similarly in the case of Egypt, we are informed, the demand was made that the land should be divided. 'Amr b. al-Āṣ, the Moslem general at the conquest, demurred, and the case was referred to Omar the Caliph, who decided that it should not be divided amongst the Moslems, but should remain in the hands of the former population on condition of certain payments. These payments could, however, be increased, Moslem law placing no limit upon them, and they were, as a matter of fact, largely increased in many cases. Altogether the system was a fruitful source of trouble, and we shall have to mention it again. We have first, however, to consider the position which Islamic law assigned to Christian (and Jewish) populations.

The Qur'ān is, as we have seen, not quite consistent in its attitude to Jews and Christians. Muhammad made advances to both in turn, but as he learned more regarding them, found that they would not recognise him, and as he found himself growing in power he broke with both in turn. On the whole, however, the People of the Book (*i.e.* Jews, Christians, Ṣabi'ans, and Magians, but principally the two former) are more favourably dealt with in the Qur'ān than the idolaters. With the latter there is no compromise. Idolatry, according to Muhammad, was to be completely rooted out. Theoretically that is what Moslem law as afterwards developed demands. Where Moslem power extends, idolaters have the choice of Islam or death. At most it is permitted that

they should be made slaves, so that they may have time to consider the acceptance of Islam. In practice indeed Islam has had to modify that attitude, and tolerate others besides People of the Book. But that has been and is its spirit towards idolatry.

The People of the Book, however, were not to be forced to change their religion. Theoretically they were to be fought and reduced to subjection. The Qur'ān lays down the precept: "*Fight against those who do not believe in God, nor in the Last Day, do not forbid what God and his Apostle forbid, nor practise the true religion, from among those who have been given the Book, until they pay the Jizya out of hand, being submissive*" (ix. v. 29) —a verse which is capable of various interpretations. But it was interpreted to mean that Jews and Christians generally were to be reduced to subjection. But if they agreed to pay the tribute (*Jizya*) they were to be tolerated in their religion. The Prophet himself had set the example in his dealings with the Christians of Najrān in South Arabia.¹ An embassy from that town visited him in Medina. They refused to accept Islam, but after some negotiation they agreed to pay tribute (2000 garments, each of the value of an ounce of gold, in the year), and in return received from him a written guarantee: "The people of Najrān and their dependents enjoy the protection of God and Muhammad, for their life, their religion, their land, and property, for their churches and the practice of their religion—no bishop or monk or *wāqif* will be

¹ Wellhausen, *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*, iv. p. 132.

forced to give up his position—and for all that is in their hand, little or much, provided it be not the product of usury or blood-money from heathen times.” There are other examples of similar conditions laid down by the Prophet for Christians in Arabia.

At the conquest the Christians were dealt with on similar lines. If they agreed to live peaceably under Moslem rule they paid the *Jizya* and the *Kharāj* for the conquered land which remained in their hand. Probably to begin with the *Jizya* and *Kharāj* were not clearly distinguished. A town or district simply paid a lump sum as tribute, the whole being designated *Jizya* (so Wellhausen conjectures in explanation of troubles which afterwards arose). But according to Moslem Law, as it afterwards took shape, the *Jizya* was a poll-tax levied at so much per head upon the adult male population (women and children and imbeciles not being reckoned), while the *Kharāj* was levied on the produce of the land. In return for these payments the non-Moslem population were entitled to protection so far as the Moslem armies could afford it, not being required to serve in military expeditions; and they were not interfered with in the practice of their religion. The law as later developed imposed certain restrictions, some of which are found already in early capitulations, as, *e.g.* that new churches should not be built, that the use of bells should be discontinued, and that religious practices should not be publicly obtruded; that the *Dhimmīs* (as the non-Moslems were called) should be distinguished in dress and in the cut of

the hair from the Moslems ; that, in fact, they should be as the Qur'ān says, "humbled". Founding also on another Qur'ān verse which forbids taking non-Moslems as friends, the later legalists held it unlawful for a *Dhimmī* to be employed in the service of the State as a clerk or other official. In one case, that of the Bani Taghlib, we even find it laid down that they should not baptize their children. That, however, is an exceptional condition, and if ever it was imposed was not kept. It was not, however, until Abbaside times that these humiliating conditions were enforced, and even then not always strictly. Instances of Christians in the public service could be found much later. In Omayyad times it was quite common. Untrained in the management of a huge empire, the Arabs in fact could not avoid taking over Christian officials. The actual work of Government offices was, as we know, performed during the first century by Christians, Jews, and Persians. With regard to the use of bells (or tom-toms) in connection with the churches, no mention is made of that in the capitulation, for instance, of Damascus, and Goldziher¹ cites a story to the effect that the Caliph Mu'awiya in his old age was troubled in his sleep by the noise of the church bells, and applied to Constantinople to have it stopped. (I have read somewhere of a soldier of the Moslem army in Damascus being also a bell-ringer in a Christian church.)

The Arab conquest was in fact a business proposition more than a religious crusade, and the Omayyad Caliphs were Arab Emperors rather

¹ Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam*, p. 172.

than heads of a Moslem religious community. So long as the Christians paid the tribute and accepted Moslem (or Arab) rule they were regarded simply as ordinary subjects, and were not much if any worse treated than the Arabs themselves. They seem to have had free access even to the Court, and the favourite poet of the Omayyad Caliphs of the first century, al-Akhtal, was a Christian of the Bani Taghlib. It was when Islam as a religion came to be taken seriously, as it was by the Abbasides, at least in their public policy, and when perhaps the influx of converted Christians had carried into it some of their own heretic-baiting spirit, that the Christian population within Moslem territory began to feel the weight of persecution and humiliation as such. But even then we find Abbaside Caliphs employing Christian doctors, in whom they displayed the utmost confidence, and encouraging Christians to translate Greek philosophy and other literature into Arabic. On the whole, the relations between Moslem and Christian seem for centuries to have been normal and friendly.

To what extent then did the population of formerly Christian countries remain Christian? Definite statistics would be difficult to come by. The most that I can attempt is a general outline of what happened.

In Arabia the great mass of the Christian Arabs seem in a very short time to have gone over to Islam. The Caliph Omar is said to have expelled all Jews and Christians from Arabia, the idea probably being that the Peninsula should be the recruiting ground for the Arab armies of Islam.

“In Arabia there shall be but one religion” is reported by Tradition as a word of the dying Prophet, and he himself had certainly given example by his expulsion of the Jews from Medina. Probably, however, no great measures of expulsion were necessary in the time of Omar. The only definite case mentioned is that of the Christians of Najrān, consecrated to Christianity though that district was by the persecution suffered under Dhu Nuwās. Lands were given them in exchange elsewhere. Some migrated to Syria, but the greater part settled in the vicinity of Kufa.¹

That seems, however, to have been an exception. The Arabs within the Peninsula seem to have gone over from Christianity to Islam without much hesitation or regret. The same applies very largely to the Arabs of Syria. The House of Ghassān, long the bulwark of the Roman Empire and of Christianity on the Syrian border, adopted Islam almost at once. “They were Lords in the days of Ignorance and Stars in Islam.”² In the Euphrates district attachment to Christianity seems to have been stronger. We hear of several nomad tribes which remained Christian. In fact there was a Bishop of the nomad Arabs a considerable time after the Arab conquest, which shows that the defection was not complete. Still, on the whole, it seems to be true that the nomad Arabs, both within the Peninsula and on its borders, went over to Islam very easily, especially when the success of its

¹ Muir, *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, p. 223.

² Arnold, *Preaching of Islam*, p. 47 (quoting from Mas'ūdi).

arms began to appear. After the great victory of Qādisiyyah, some of the Christian Arab tribes came to Sa'd, the victorious general, and said, "The tribes which at first embraced Islam were wiser than we. Now that Rustam hath been slain all will accept the new belief." So there came over many tribes in a body and made profession of the faith.¹ The attachment even of the nominally Christian tribes to that faith had probably never been very deep, and they could have had but a very superficial understanding of it. Indeed, what interest could the abstruse questions of Christology, about which the Eastern Church had been kept in a ferment for centuries, have had for them? The formulæ of doctrine could at most have been for the ordinary populations even of the settled countries little more than slogans of party warfare; if they were not also symbols of national spirit protesting against imperial rule under the form of the Orthodox Faith.

Now, at any rate to the Arabs, had come a stronger call of nationality. Religiously—if they were religiously inclined—Islam probably gave them all that they required. It was Monotheistic, and it reformed with a strong hand the worst moral abuses of Paganism. In place of the abstruse speculations as to the nature of God and the relation of the divine to the human with which the attention of the Church had been so largely taken up in its Trinitarian and Christological controversies, Islam harked back to the idea of a God of power and of moral will, express-

¹ Muir, *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, p. 177.

ing his will for man through inspired prophetic individuals, which was the basis of it all, and to which the Semitic genius had all along held fast.

So religious spirits amongst the Arabs may well have argued. But probably considerations of that kind weighed little. What did weigh was the appeal of Islam to the national spirit, backed as it soon came to be by the immense plunder which fell to the Moslem armies as they gained success outside the Peninsula. With his political genius Muhammad had indeed discerned a strong bond of national unity and kinship underlying the superficial appearance of perpetual feud and enmity among the Arabs, and the Moslem conquest was as much an outburst of Arab nationality as a religious movement. Christian Arabs fought in the Moslem armies, and fought with as much bravery and vigour as the tribes that had accepted Islam before the wars of conquest had begun: witness the case of the Bani Namr who joined Muthanna's army before the Battle of Buwaib.¹ The appeal to kinship was no doubt brought to bear upon the settled populations within both the Persian and the Roman Empire. Witness what is reported as to Khālid's conversation with the representatives of the people of Hira when the place capitulated.² When they refused to accept Islam, "Beshrew the fools," he exclaimed, "here two guides are offered, an Arab and a stranger, and of the two they choose the stranger."

The most curious example of the effect of

¹ Muir, *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, p. 134.

² Muir, *op. cit.* p. 81.

the sentiment of Arab patriotism is perhaps the story of the Bani Taghlib¹—if the story can be accepted. It has been set down as a later invention by a recent investigator. They were Christians, and refused to accept Islam, though the Moslems had overrun their territory, and they were strongly urged to do so by the Moslem general. But they also objected to pay the *Jizya*, and rather than do so proposed to migrate into Roman territory. They agreed, however, ultimately to pay double the *Ṣadaqa* which was paid by Moslems. Their objection evidently was not so much to the amount as to paying under a different name from other Arabs.

The population of the towns seem to have retained their religion and agreed to pay the *Jizya*. The same applies to the settled agricultural populations of the Sawād, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Egypt. They settled down under Arab rule, and in all these places Christian Churches have survived down even to the present day. But how sadly diminished in numbers and in pride of place! It is not my intention at present to follow their history very far, but only to indicate what happened in the first century or so of Islam. Within that period there was a very rapid passing over of these populations to Islam. The reason probably did not lie in any specifically religious persecution directed against them. We hear of very few cases of forced conversion to the new faith once the tide of conquest had swept over a country and passed beyond it. The Omayyad Caliphs were

¹ Balādhuri, *op. cit.* p. 189 f.

not conspicuous for missionary zeal. What Goldziher says of the champions of Islam in general, that they were not concerned so much with the conversion as with the subjugation of unbelievers, applies especially to them. True, the populations of the provinces were subjected to much hardship under Omayyad governors. The tribute demanded from conquered territories could, as already pointed out, be increased, and most governors made their offices a source of personal enrichment.¹ But that can hardly be called persecution of Christians as such. It did, however, help to accentuate the situation which we shall see was the main motive for the conversion of these populations.

There may have been cases of real conversion. There were keen missionaries of Islam as a religion even in these days. Discussion and arguments between members of the two religions seem to have been fairly frequent. The fact that John of Damascus and other Christian writers composed dialogues, which are, in a sort, handbooks of guidance to Christians as to how to meet the arguments of their opponents, shows that the appeals of Moslems to reason and argument were not without effect.

But if we consider the position of these Christians (and members of other faiths) under Moslem rule, and the social and monetary advantages of adopting Islam, we will not require much further explanation of the fact that, as time went on, Islam increased and Christianity decreased. Islam was in the position of the ruling faith.

¹ *Vide* Van Vloten, *La Domination arabe*.

Though at first Christians, Jews, and others found employment pretty freely in the Government service, yet the tendency to dispense with them soon began to show itself. In any case, they could only occupy subordinate positions. Career was open only to Moslems, and in fact under the Omayyads, only to Arabs, or to those who, adopting Islam, managed to secure the patronage of some powerful Arab. The social pressure to adopt the new faith must have been very strong, even although not consciously exerted. Aspiring spirits among the subject peoples would naturally desire to have some share in the dazzling wealth and brilliant careers which the progress of conquest was setting before the eyes of their Arab and Moslem neighbours.

Even for others, the quiet cultivators of the soil, the monetary advantages of adopting Islam were very great. As Christians they were subject to the payment of the tribute (*Jizya*), from which as Moslems they might hope to become free. For, according to the Qur'ān and Moslem law, the *Jizya* was only payable by non-Moslems. So these people, groaning under the exactions of the Omayyad Moslem governors, came over to Islam in crowds.

In Egypt the revenue from the tribute fell from 12 million *dīnārs* in the time of 'Amr the conqueror, and 14 millions under his tyrannical successor, to 5 millions in the time of Mu'āwiya, 4 millions in the time of Harūn ar-Rashīd, and ultimately to 3 millions.¹ In 'Irāq the revenue fell from 100 millions in the reign of Omar to

¹ Butler, *Arab Conquest of Egypt*, p. 463.

40 millions in the reign of Abd-al-Malik some fifty years later.¹ 'Irāq was, however, a turbulent province often wasted by rebellion and war.

Facts like these, however, could not be viewed with equanimity by the Moslem governors. It was this fiscal difficulty which lay behind the ruthless policy of Hajjāj, the notorious but capable Omayyad governor of 'Irāq. People were forbidden to leave their land and their villages. Those who had left were sent back. The name of their district was even branded upon their hands. The *Jizya* was exacted from those who had become Moslems, and lands which had passed into Moslem hands had still to pay its share of the tribute. Into these matters this is not the place to enter. They troubled Islam for many years, and were amongst the causes which led to the downfall of the Omayyad dynasty. What interests us is that it is proof of the fact that great numbers of the Christian population were passing over to Islam, and it indicates a very potent reason for that mass-conversion.

To sum up then : By the extraordinary rapid extension of the Arab conquests Islam had, while still unformed, been transplanted from Arabia to lands which had long been the homes of a culture far in advance of anything which the land of its origin had ever known. The centre of its worldly power was transferred first to Damascus, then to Baghdad, and these places soon became also the centres of its intellectual life. Both were situated in lands which had been deeply penetrated by Hellenic Christian culture, though in Baghdad

¹ Arnold, *Preaching of Islam*, p. 81.

there was a strong infusion of Persian and perhaps also Indian influences. This youthful religion had to adapt itself to circumstances and assimilate ideas of which its founder had never dreamed, and the pressure of events made it necessary that it should do so with what, for such a development, may be called extraordinary rapidity. It was all the time in contact with faiths older than itself. The Christian Church continued to exist in the lands where this development took place, opposing to it an intellectual system which had been built up through centuries of keen mental activity, founded upon a philosophy which had a still older tradition behind it. Further, Islam soon numbered among its adherents multitudes who had been brought up under other faiths. The Persians, the Aramaic and Egyptian Christians who adopted Islam soon far outnumbered the Arabs. The men to whom the intellectual development of Islam was ultimately due were for the most part not Arabs, but the descendants of the conquered populations who had adopted the faith of the conquerors but did not fail to exercise a considerable transforming influence upon it. What part Christianity played in the consolidation of Islam will be the subject of the next lecture.

LECTURE VII

CHRISTIAN INFLUENCES IN EARLY ISLAM

By the process of conquest and assimilation of subject peoples Islam itself was not unaffected. It went through a period of development and consolidation. I want in this lecture to indicate some of the ways in which Christianity affected that development. It will have to be done very generally. I take the three lines of Popular Influence, Theology, and the Transmission of Greek Philosophy.

The great influx of Christian converts to Islam, which took place in the end of the first and the beginning of the second century of the Hijra, naturally brought Christian popular ideas with it. These converts did not entirely change their spirit by changing the name of their religion. It has been even asserted that it was they who brought into Islam the spirit of partisanship and bigotry to which they themselves had been so long accustomed. Of that it would be unfair to lay the whole or even the main blame upon them. Islam in the beginning was tolerant in a sense. So long as the Christians submitted and paid the tribute they were not very much molested, and even enjoyed a considerable amount

of liberty. But that was because the Omayyad Caliphs and Governors were not so much religious leaders as worldly rulers. As the religious system took deeper hold, Islam would probably of itself have developed a stricter spirit. But these Christian converts must have brought with them much that belonged to their former faith. The collections of Moslem Traditions contain many stories and sayings which are evidently of Biblical and Christian origin. It was natural that the early Moslems should show keen interest in the Bible, and their discussions with Christians would help to make them familiar with the contents of Scripture. Still, I think it was by way of popular importation that much of the Christian material in the Traditions came.

These collections of Traditions contain a great mass of material true and false, sober sense mingled with wildest fancy. Islam began as a theocracy, guided directly by Muhammad in the name of God. When he died that source of guidance was removed. The Qur'ān ceased to be delivered. It remained only to be collected. As prophet, Muhammad had no successor. The Shī'a indeed regard the divine light which dwelt in Muhammad as having been transmitted to his descendants of the house of Ali. But according to the orthodox view, prophecy died with Muhammad. The Qur'ān, suited to the conditions of Arabia, did not cover the many difficulties which arose in a world-wide empire. Yet pious Moslems felt that Islam was a religion and a law which must have its own answer to all these questions. When the Qur'ān failed to

give clear guidance it was natural to ask what the Prophet himself had done in similar circumstances. That was the *Sunna*, the custom of the Prophet, which ultimately took its place alongside the Qur'ān as the source of authoritative guidance for the Moslem community. Hence the collection of traditions regarding the sayings and doings of the Prophet had for Islam not only an historical interest, but a practical, legal, and religious interest as well. Events, however, ran ahead of theory. As often as not Tradition had to find authority for an already accepted and established custom. The production of a tradition from the Prophet became one of the ways of supporting a custom or sentiment which one desired to see accepted. The authors of the great collections of Tradition which were made in the third century of Islam exercised extreme care and strict criticism according to their lights. But in spite of that many things which certainly do not derive from Muhammad have found their way into these collections, and some things which were rejected, for instance, by Bukhārī, the most authoritative of these collectors, have yet survived in popular memory. The Tradition is the deposit of the development rather than its source.

While the sentiment of the community would operate strongly against the introduction of any ritual practice or doctrine which was patently inconsistent with the Qur'ān, in the case of edifying sayings, stories, and such like that sentiment did not operate. It was perhaps felt that if these had not been spoken by Muhammad they ought to have been, and we know how easily

such sayings and stories do get, quite unintentionally, transferred from one personage to another. Thus we find quite a number of sayings both from the Old Testament and from the New, reported as having been spoken by Muhammad. On the authority of Abu Huraira, upon whom a large proportion of these pious and edifying sayings are fathered, the Prophet is reported to have commended, "*the man who gives alms, but hides it so that his left hand does not know what his right hand does*".¹ On the same authority, the Prophet is reported to have said: "*One of you does not really believe until I am dearer to him than father or son*",² a reminiscence probably of the Gospel saying: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." I need not continue citations of these. It was natural that these things should find their way into collections of sayings of the Prophet, and Goldziher,³ and recently Guillaume,⁴ have cited a number of them. I shall only cite this, which will lead us over to another phenomenon. The Prophet is reported to have declared that: "*God the mighty and glorious has said: I am present when my servant thinks of me: I am with him when he remembers me: Verily God rejoices more over his servant's repentance than one of you when he finds his strayed animal in the wilderness. Whoever draws near to me an inch I draw near to him a span, and whoever draws near to me a span I draw near to him an ell. When he*

¹ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, K. az-Zakāt, b. 13.

² *Id.*, K. al-Imān, b. 7.

³ *Muhammadanische Studien*, ii. p. 382 ff.

⁴ *The Traditions of Islam*, p. 132 ff.

*approaches me at a walk I approach him at a run.”*¹ It cannot be said that the God of the Qur’ān is any too forgiving. He is merciful indeed. But in contact with Christianity Moslems must have felt that the consistent grace and forgiveness of God needed to be emphasised. Materials for this lay ready to hand in Christian sources. That the desire to outbid Christianity in this respect was not altogether absent may perhaps be shown by the following story, which is gravely recounted as having been told by the Prophet: “*Among those who lived in former times was a man who had killed 99 persons. Thinking to repent, he enquired for a wise man and was directed to a monk. He went to him and asked whether having killed 99 persons there was any possibility of repentance for him. The monk said, ‘No!’ So he killed the monk and completed his hundred. Then he enquired again and was directed to a scholar (i.e. a Moslem ‘Alim). To him he put the like question whether having killed 100 persons there was any possibility of repentance for him. The scholar replied, ‘Yes! No one can stand between you and repentance. Go to such a land where there is a company who worship Allah Most High. Worship Allah Most High along with them and do not return to your own country; for surely it is a wicked land.’ So he set off. But when he was half-way death overtook him. Then arose a dispute regarding him between the angels of mercy and the angels of punishment. The angels of mercy maintained that he was coming to Allah repentant. The angels of punishment argued that he had never done good in*

¹ Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ, K. at-Tauba, b. 1.

his life. Then came to them an angel in human form and they made him arbiter. He suggested that they should measure the distance between the two countries and to whichever he was nearest they should reckon him as belonging. So they measured and found that he was nearer the country to which he was journeying than to that which he had left. So the angels of mercy took possession of him."¹ Another version adds that the man was only nearer by a span. But lest it should appear that he had after all only escaped by the skin of his teeth, a third version adds that God ordered one country to draw back and the other to approach.

It would probably be hasty to say that the angel in human form who appears as arbiter is a reminiscence of Jesus. But the story may at any rate be taken as an illustration of the activities of the Qāṣṣ. Some of the early Caliphs had at their court a sort of official relater of traditions whose occupation it was to recount stories partly for edification and partly for entertainment. The temptation to be entertaining must at any rate have been very strong upon these men. Later the Qāṣṣ carried his activities to public places and became a kind of popular entertainer. Thus he fell into disrepute with the learned. But his earlier activities may account for some of the strange matter which we find floating in the wide sea of the Traditions.

To return to the conglomeration of sayings which I quoted above, I think the Biblical flavour of them must have been evident, though it is difficult to quote literally exact parallels for them.

¹ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, K. *at-Tauba*, b. 46.

They come at second or third hand. The source of the saying, "God rejoices more over His servant's repentance than one of you when he finds his stray animal in the wilderness", is, however, unmistakable (*vide* Gospel of Luke, ch. xv. v. 3 ff.). Further, the saying has developed into an independent story suited to Arab life. There are several versions of it, but the general outline is the same in all. A man is travelling across a desert, his supply of food and drink loaded upon a camel. He dismounts for his noonday rest, and falls asleep; when he wakes up he finds that his camel has gone; he seeks it until he is overcome with thirst. Then he says: "I will return to the place where I was, and will go to sleep and die". He returns and lays his head on his arm to die, but waking up he finds his beast beside him loaded with his supply of food and drink. God is more rejoiced over the repentance of His believing servant than this man over his beast and his provisions.

Naturally the Parables of the New Testament furnished material which was readily transferred and adapted. Of that I shall only quote the following example: the Prophet is reported to have said: the two Peoples of the Book may be described by the following story: "*A man hired labourers and said who will work for me from the morning till the middle of the day for a qīrāt? So the Jews worked. Then he said: Who will work for me from the middle of the day till afternoon prayer for a qīrāt? So the Christians worked. Then he said: Who will work for me from afternoon prayer till sunset for two qīrāts? Ye (i.e.*

the Moslems) are they. *The Jews and Christians became angry and said: What is wrong with us that we get the most work and the least pay? He replied: Have I diminished aught of your right? They said: No. He replied: Then that is my bounty, I give it to whom I will.*"¹ The derivation of that from the New Testament parable of the labourers in the vineyard is, I think, evident.

The miracle stories of the Old and New Testaments were perhaps even more fruitful in influence upon popular Islam. The motif of the miraculous increase of food as in the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, occurs in various forms. I give one in which it is not yet connected with the prophet or only remotely so. According to tradition there was a bench in the mosque at Medina on which poor people sat who were dependent on the bounty of the Prophet and the richer Moslems. Abd ar-Rahmān, the son of Abu Bakr, is made the authority for the following story (I shorten it a little): *At the Prophet's request Abu Bakr took three of these people to his house to give them supper. He himself, however, went to the Prophet's house and delayed until supper-time was past. Coming home later he found that they had not supped. He blamed his son for want of hospitality, and though it was explained to him that it was the guests themselves who had refused to eat until he were present, in his irritation he vowed that he would not taste the food. The guests fell to. But for every bit of food which they took from the platter, a larger piece grew up from below; so that when they were satisfied there was more than when*

¹ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, K. *al-Ijāra*.

*they began. Then Abu Bakr ate of it, saying that his vow had been from Satan. In the morning he took it to the Prophet. It happened that a treaty had expired and an expedition was gathered consisting of twelve leaders and ' God knows how many men '. It sufficed for them all.*¹

It is as certain as anything in his life can be, that Muhammad did not claim the power of working miracles. Sorely tempted as he must have been to produce a "sign" of his own, he was content to point to the "signs" of God's intervention in former times and the revelation of the Qur'ān to himself. But to the Moslem community he was the last and greatest of the prophets. If other prophets worked miracles he must surely have performed equal and greater. Quite early, miracle stories began to grow around his name. The motif of the miraculous increase of food was as we would expect, transferred directly to him. Perhaps even more frequently, the miraculous production of water was ascribed to him, as, for instance, in the incident of the expedition to Tabuk related already by the earliest biographers.² In the course of that expedition, the Prophet came to a little trickle of water from the hillside, the accumulation of which had been drunk out by some who had preceded him. Moistening his hand with the water he anointed the rock and prayed over it, whereupon the water came down in a torrent which had a sound like that of thunder. Many incidents of the same kind are associated with the Prophet.

¹ Bukhāri, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, K. *Mawāqīt aṣ-Ṣalāt*, b. 41.

² Ibn Hishām, i. p. 904.

If miracle stories found their way so early into the accounts of the Prophet's expeditions where one would have expected the light of history to be fairly clear, the early part of his life offered even more scope for them. They gather numerous round his birth, his escape from Mecca at the Hijra, and round his call to the prophetic office. Of all perhaps the night-journey is the most remarkable and the one which has had the greatest consequences in Islam. It finds a nucleus in the Qur'ān (Surah xvii. v. 1) : "*Glory to him who by night carried his servant from the Mosque of the Haram, to the further Mosque*". The ground of this may have been a dream in which the Prophet saw himself transported to the Temple of Jerusalem. But it has grown into a wonderful story of a night-journey in the company of Gabriel, first to Jerusalem, and then through the seven heavens to the very presence of God, whom Muhammad is said to have seen and spoken to. The Apocalyptic literature of Judaism and Christianity has probably supplied most of the motifs for this story.¹ I only mention two details which seem to show direct Biblical influence. In a less developed form of the legend Muhammad is simply said to have met the prophets Adam, Idris, Moses, Jesus, and Abraham. (The later story tells in which heaven each was met and the conversation which passed with each.) That may have been suggested by the Transfiguration story of the Gospels. Again, we have a reminiscence of Abraham's bargaining with God for the sparing of Sodom in that part

¹ *Vide* Tor Andrae, *Die Person Muhammads*, p. 39 ff.

of the story which tells that when Muhammad first spoke to God he was commissioned to prescribe fifty prayers a day for his people. On his way back he passed near Moses who asked him how many prayers had been prescribed, and learning the number advised Muhammad to return and beg for a reduction of the number. This he did several times until the number was reduced to five.¹

Thus we see even in the first two centuries, the biography of Muhammad being decked out with all the kinds of miraculous and legendary stories with which we are familiar in the case of the Christian saints and Jewish rabbis, and having ascribed to him also that direct mystic vision which ascetics both Jewish and Christian have enjoyed. These things opened the way for that religious veneration of the Prophet (and of the later *walīs*) which is so characteristic of, and such a strength to, popular Islam; and also to that mysticism which has provided Moslems with a relief from the hard intellectuality of their orthodox theology.

Mysticism and Asceticism in Islam form a subject too wide and important to be treated here. Muhammad was certainly not an ascetic, though there was in his teaching from the first the great motive which lies behind all asceticism, an intense fear of God and His Judgement. That persisted in Islam, and afforded congenial soil upon which asceticism might flourish. But there is no doubt that the seed of the growth of ascetic practices came from the outside. All sorts of

¹ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, K. *aṣ-Ṣalāt*, b. 1.

influences have no doubt gone to the production of Sufism; Western and Oriental, Neo-Platonic and Buddhist as well as native Moslem. Still, it seems to be true that in its first beginnings Muhammadan Mysticism was simply a quietistic asceticism such as was so commonly practised by Christian monks. The word *Ṣūfī* used to denote these ascetics, which has clung to the movement through all its wonderful development, practical and philosophical, is derived from *ṣūf*, a word meaning wool, and "was originally applied to those Moslem ascetics who, in imitation of Christian hermits, clad themselves in coarse woollen garb as a sign of penitence and renunciation of worldly vanities".¹ So that it was originally through the channel of popular Christianity with its practice of, and reverence for, asceticism, that this ascetic and mystic movement which has played such a part in Islam received the stimulus which caused it to germinate. The truth of this is confirmed by the fact that Moslem theologians were at first bitterly hostile to it. The grafting of Mysticism upon the intellectualism of Moslem theology was the work of Ghazzālī, the greatest of the theologians of Islam, who lived in the latter half of the fifth century.

Another direction in which Christian influence is manifest is in the traditions bearing on Eschatology and the signs of the End of the World. We know what a part these things have always played in popular Christianity, and we have seen also that Muhammad himself was deeply impressed by ideas of that kind. Around the signs of the

¹ Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, p. 3 f.

Last Day mentioned in the Qur'ān popular imagination naturally exercised itself. But we soon find ideas introduced which are not to be found there. That there will be dissensions and civil wars among Moslems before the end comes is probably a deduction from the actual course of events. But the idea of the *harj*, the great slaughter which will come at the end of the world, has suggestive similarity with Christian chiliastic beliefs, all the more so as the meaning "slaughter" which is specifically assigned to the word *harj* in these traditions is more appropriate to the root in Hebrew than in Arabic.

The irruption of Gog and Magog is mentioned already in the Qur'ān, but the Beast which is to appear before the End is probably borrowed from the same field of speculation at a later date. In spite of the number of traditions which refer to it, no very clear account of it is given. That the figure of the Dajjāl which plays a large part in these traditions, and in popular thought, comes from the same source is certain. The word is Aramaic. The full title which appears in some of the traditions is *al-masīḥ ad-dajjāl*, which corresponds to the Syriac *meshīhā daggālā*, the false Messiah or false Christ (cf. Matt. xxiv. v. 24), the Antichrist of Christian anticipations. The Dajjāl is sometimes represented as a monster, and that is the form in which it is nowadays most commonly thought of. But in the Traditions, the Dajjāl is mostly represented as a man. Sometimes he is described as being "blind of an eye", or "blind of the left eye", or "with eyes straight up and down"; "with shaggy" or

“with curly hair”; or again as “having the word *kāfir* (unbeliever) written between his eyes, so that those who can read will plainly see it”. Sometimes it is said that “he will appear between Syria and Iraq”; sometimes, “that Khurasān will be the place of his first appearance”. These are additions derived from historical experiences. “He is a false prophet bringing a false religion”; “his Paradise will be Hell, and his Hell, Paradise”. He will work certain miracles, “producing or withholding rain”, and other things of that nature; and will deceive, if not the very elect, at any rate many professing Moslems. In one tradition it is said that “the Jews will follow him, and perish in his overthrow”. His reign will last for forty years, “*a year like half-a-year, a year like a month, a month like a week, and the last of his days like a spark*” (the days will be shortened; cf. Mark xiii. v. 20). More commonly it is said that he will reign for forty days, “*one day like a year, another like a month, another like a week, and the rest of his days like ordinary days*”. The juggling with numbers and with times seems to be inseparable from that species of speculation! Remembering the source of the figure of the Dajjāl, it will not surprise us so much that according to these traditions he is to be overthrown by Jesus (Isa b. Maryam). Jesus will appear according to one version at the white minaret on the east of (the mosque of) Damascus; according to another at Jerusalem. He will pursue the Dajjāl, and overtaking him at the gate of Ludd or Lydda, will slay him.¹

¹ Most of these details are taken from Ibn Mājā: *Sunan*, K. *al-Fitan*.

The appearance of Jesus in this environment leaves no doubt as to whence these things came to the Moslems. In some of these traditions it is further stated that Jesus will rule as a just Imam. One of those from which I have been quoting above, after telling of the overthrow of the Dajjāl goes on as follows : “ *The Messenger of God said : ‘ Isa b. Maryam will be a just judge and a well-conducted Imam among my people, making smooth the rough things, slaying the pigs, remitting the jizya, and leaving off taking the ṣadaqa. Tax will not be levied upon sheep or camel. Envy and enmity will be taken away. The poison of every poisonous animal will be removed, so that a little boy may put his hand in the mouth of a snake, and it will not harm him, and a little girl may put a lion to flight and it will not harm her. The wolf will be among the flocks like their dog, and the earth shall be full of Moslems as the vessel is full of water. The creed shall be one, and there shall be no worship but that of Allah. War shall cease its ravages, and the Quraish shall be deprived of their kingdom. The earth will be like an ingot of silver, and will bring forth its vegetation as in the days of Adam’* ”; and so on.¹

The kinship of that, with Christian millennial ideas and with the eleventh chapter of Isaiah hardly needs to be pointed out. But I want to call attention to the phrase, “ *the Quraish shall be deprived of their kingdom* ”. That transports us at once into the situation before the fall of the Omayyad dynasty when the populations were being ground by unjust governors and the Mawālī

¹ Ibn Mājā, *loc. cit.*, b. 33, 7.

(those not of Arab race who had come over to Islam), were being denied what they were beginning to learn were their just claims—freedom from the Jizya, and equal rights with other Moslems. There is no doubt that these Messianic beliefs played some considerable part in preparing the way for the uprising of the Mawālī which overthrew the Omayyads, and that they were used by the adroit politicians of the Abbaside family to maintain an atmosphere of expectation and hope of better things when a ruler belonging to the Prophet's family should attain to power. The underground scheming and whispered propaganda of that time can only be guessed at. But we know that when the time came there was among the converted populations—especially in Iraq—not only widespread discontent, but also a widespread disposition to accept a ruler of the Prophet's family. Properly speaking, that ought to have helped the House of Ali to power, but the Abbasides had known how to play upon that sentiment, and to keep their own pretensions secret from all but the initiated till the victory was practically secure. The Ali'ites thus disappointed remained, under the Abbasides, a troublesome element. Rebellion after rebellion, of which some member of the ill-fated family was made the figure-head, had to be slaked in blood. The Shi'a, the party of Ali, gradually drew apart from orthodox Islam, a difference of doctrine and of spirit growing out of the political cleavage. It was with the Shi'a and with the extreme sects which grew out of the same root that the Messianic expectations were at first most closely associated.

But popular Islam has always been susceptible to the idea of the *Māhdi*—"the guided one"—the just ruler who shall arise in the end of time and fill the earth with equity and justice as it has been filled with tyranny and oppression. Remembering that, as I have already mentioned, according to other traditions, Jesus was to appear as an upright Judge and just Imam, remit the *Jizya*, and so on, the presumption is that the figure of the *Māhdi* is the adaptation of the figure of the millennial Christ, or that, at any rate, the political desire for a just Caliph decked itself out with these eschatological ideas. Other details which are associated with the *Māhdi* appear also associated with the appearance of Jesus such as the great rain, the great productivity of the earth, and the cheapness and plenty of everything. That the adaptation took place in the time of the Abbaside propaganda is perhaps shown by the traditions which declare that the *Māhdi* will come of the Prophet's house or by the following which definitely associates the coming of the *Māhdi* with the Abbaside rising which began in Khurasan.

*"A people will come out of the East and will smooth the way for the Māhdi."*¹

"The Messenger of God said: Three will fight over your Treasures. They will not become the property of any of them. Then will appear the black flags from the direction of the East. They will make such slaughter of you as was not made by any people. Then, says the narrator, he mentioned something which I have not remembered.

¹ Ibn Mājā, *loc. cit.*, b. 34, 7.

*Then he said: "When you see him, swear allegiance to him even if you have to creep upon the snow. For he is the vice-gerent of God—the Māhdi."*¹

These things which I have mentioned found their way into Islam by way of the mind of the people. They, of course, affected Moslem theology, for theology had to find a place for what had become so deeply rooted in the mind of the Moslem populace. But there was also a direct influence of Christian theology upon the thought of the younger religion. As showing how that took place I take two things which occur in the works of John of Damascus. John's father was a Christian who was employed in an official position at the court of the Omayyad caliphs at Damascus. He himself in early life occupied a similar position, and began his literary activity there before he withdrew to the monastery of Saba where the latter part of his life was spent. In the introduction to his great dogmatic work in which he treats of the heresies he devotes a section to Islam. There is also included in his works a Dialogue with a Saracen which is a kind of manual for the guidance of Christians in their arguments with Muhammadans. It is not the only work of that kind which has come down to us from that early time. It is not perhaps so interesting as we might expect from the situation to which it belongs. But the very fact of such a work having been composed is itself suggestive. It proves what in itself is inherently likely—that arguments of that kind were fairly frequent. It

¹ Ibn Mājā, *loc. cit.*, b. 34, 3.

corresponds also to the situation that it is a manual for defensive argument rather for attack. The Moslems held the upper hand, and we may imagine that often they would attack the beliefs of Christians or try to persuade them to the acceptance of Islam. It is to supply the Christians with answers to these attacks and arguments that the little book was composed.

The Dialogue centres round two main questions—the freedom of the human will and the Divinity of Jesus Christ. In regard to the first the Saracen does not seem to have any very well-defined position of his own. He seems concerned rather to involve the Christian who denies that God is the author of evil and therefore maintains that man has freewill within limits, in difficulties which imply a limitation of God's power. The argumentation is to our minds primitive on both sides. But at any rate the questions of the Moslem show a much more naïve conception of the problem than the answers of the Christian. He seems almost to be sitting at the Christian's feet for instruction. Nor is that altogether due to the fact that it is from the Christian controversialist that we learn his arguments. His questions are real questions such as, with the Qur'ān in his mind, a Moslem would naturally ask. He already shows the tendency to emphasise the supreme and continuous creative power of God which ultimately triumphed in Islam and which was strongly present in it from the first. But we can quite well conceive that in trying to raise difficulties for the Christian on this subject he found himself involved in questions

for which his own mind had no satisfactory solution, and that the arguments of the Christian were not without effect. As a matter of fact we know that it was on this very subject, and in Syria, in the time of the Omayyads, that the first theological discussions arose in Islam. We hear of a sect of Qadarites who held that man was endowed with a certain amount of *Qadar*, "power" or "freewill". I think we may assume that these discussions with Christians were thus early beginning to have influence upon the thought of Islam just in process of formation.

The other question is even more interesting. The position assigned to Christ must have seemed to the Moslem easily assailable. On the basis of the Qur'ān it must have seemed to him little removed from idolatry. But brought into contact with instructed Christian thinkers he must have found himself transported into a field which he did not understand. "If", says John, "you are asked by a Saracen: What do you say Christ is? say to him: The Word (Logos) of God." John is conscious that this is a wily answer, for he adds that he does not think there is anything wrong in it, for Christ is called the Word in Scripture as well as Wisdom and many other things. Then the Christian is to ask the Moslem: 'What is Christ called in his own Scriptures?' and to refuse to answer any more questions until he replies. For he will be bound to reply that Christ is referred to in the Qur'ān as "the spirit and word of God".¹ Then the Christian is to

¹ John, we may note, knows the Qur'ān; and the Moslem controversialists evidently know a good deal about the Bible.

ask further whether according to the Qur'ān this spirit and word is created or uncreated. If he replies, as he is practically bound to reply, that he is created, he is to be met by the retort that before creating the word and spirit God must have had neither word (Logos) nor spirit; *i.e.* God must be ultimately unreasonable unintelligent Power. "Then", adds John, "he will flee from you, having nothing to answer, for people who hold such an opinion are regarded as heretical among the Saracens and altogether abominable."

Another question follows which shows the Moslem trying to raise difficulties about this position which he has been driven to admit: Are the words (*logia*) of God created or uncreated? He is evidently designing to drive the Christian to the position that if the Logos be uncreated and therefore divine, the words of God (in Scripture) must also be in the same position. This leads the Christian to a long explanation that the words of Scripture are not *logoi* but *rhēmata*, and that the Scripture often uses words not in their strictly accurate sense but tropologically. Into that we need not go. But we may note that here we have a hint—perhaps a little more than a hint, but still interesting—of how the difficulty about the Logos was afterwards solved. In later times the Logos doctrine was applied to Muhammad himself by the mystic thinkers of Islam,¹ but at this early stage that was impossible. It was applied to the Qur'ān. Thus we have in orthodox Islam the doctrine of the eternal uncreated Qur'ān practically taking the place of

¹ *Vide* Tor Andræ, *Die Person Muhammads*, p. 333 ff.

the eternal uncreated Word or Son of God. It is perhaps too much to say that it was these discussions with Christians which led to the adoption of that doctrine; for the Qur'ān itself had paved the way for it. But they must have helped considerably towards the realisation of the necessity for it.

The only other argument which I shall notice is one which perhaps does not belong to John's own Dialogue but which is given by Theodore Abu Qurra as being derived from him. It is an argument which is still used by Moslems and amounts to this. The world before Moses was given up to idolatry. After his coming Judaism was the right religion. Christianity superseded it after the coming of Christ. Why then should not Muhammadanism be the true religion since the coming of Muhammad? To this the reply is not that reason must judge of the truth of a religion—the Christians of that time would as little have accepted that position as the Moslems—but that it is not enough that a man should claim to be a prophet and preach and teach a religion. His commission from God must be evidenced by signs and wonders and the miracles which he performs. Thus we see the Moslems being by way of these discussions brought up against the necessity for the mission of their prophet being evidenced by miracles, which we have already seen popular imagination supplying.

Apart from the interest of the separate arguments, however, there is in this Dialogue of John of Damascus a peculiar interest in that it gives us a glimpse into a process that must have gone

on very widely in these early days of Islam. Here was a religion just as it were emerged from the desert, full of the fire of enthusiasm as no doubt it was in the case of many of its devotees, but absolutely naïve in its conceptions of the world. Its astonishing success as a conquering community brought it at once into contact over a wide area and under conditions of the closest association with a culture much older and much more advanced than that out of which it had sprung. Continued success was giving it the leisure to reflect upon itself. And we see its followers in their arguments with Christians being driven back upon problems for which they had no solution. The necessity of adjusting itself to a general philosophy would no doubt have arisen in any case. But brought thus early into contact with the elaborate system of Christian theology, the lines of that adjustment must have been to some extent prescribed for it. Christian theology in a manner set the questions which Islam with its own different materials had to answer. Not only so, but the thought-world to which it had to adjust itself was no longer the thought-world of Arabia but soon came to be the same Hellenistic thought-world with which the Christian Church had had to grapple, and which in the East it had played a large part in forming.

The course of history decreed that it should not be in Syria or in Egypt that Hellenistic culture was introduced into Islam, but further to the East, in the lands where the Nestorian Church had worked, suffered, and flourished. The Omayyad caliphs had their seats in Syria.

But while they ruled, interest in Greek thought and knowledge did not produce much result. Times were still unsettled. The caliphs did not much encourage such intellectual interest. One of the princes of the Omayyad house, Khālid b. Yazīd, interested himself in alchemy. But he was an exception. These Omayyad princes were Arabs by race and sentiment, and their encouragement was given to the old desert poetry and traditions of Arab life.

It was after the Abbasides came to the throne in 132 A.H. that Islam really became international, and began to absorb the culture of the peoples it had conquered. They built a new city as their capital, the famous city of Baghdad, on the banks of the Tigris. It became the centre of the Muhammadan world, distinguished alike by its wealth, its luxury, its literary brilliance, and its schools of learning.

The impulse to this outburst of intellectual activity came from contact with the culture of the Eastern world. Persian and even Indian influences played their part. But more important than either of these was that form of Hellenism which the Syrians had transmitted to the East. The Syrians were not an original people, but they were diligent translators of Greek works.

There were three great centres of Greek learning in the East before the rise of Islam. One was Harran (or Charrae), which was a heathen city, surrounded though it was by Christian influences. There Greek science especially had found zealous cultivators. Another was Nisibis, the best-known school of the Nestorian Church,

where especially Greek philosophy was studied, that being essential as a foundation of the Church's theological teaching. A third was at Junde-Shapur (Beth Lapat). This famous school was in Persia proper, and had been founded by one of the Chosroes in imitation and emulation of the school of Antioch. At a later time it had been strengthened by some of those who were expelled from Edessa, when that famous school within the borders of the Roman Empire was closed in consequence of its Nestorian sympathies. It was therefore also largely Christian. It remained, long after the triumph of Islam, a centre of medical and scientific knowledge. The private physicians of the Abbaside caliphs were drawn from it, and, though these physicians occupied positions of great trust and responsibility, by their names they must have been Christians.

In fact, the practice of medicine in those days was largely in the hands of Christians and Jews. The Nestorian Church had indeed played a great part in introducing Greek philosophy and science into the East. It had all along displayed an honourable zeal for knowledge as well as for missionary activity.

As the result of the labour of Syriac writers, not only the works of the Greek theologians had been translated into Syriac, but also a large number of Greek philosophical, scientific, and medical works. When translations began to be made into Arabic it was from Syriac that they were first made. Later, when the Caliph Ma'mun gave his personal interest and active encourage-

ment to this work, fresh translations were made direct from the Greek. But even then the majority of the translators, including Ḥunain b. Ishāq, the best known of them all, were Christians. Thus it may be said that the Christian Church of the East transmitted Greek knowledge to Moslem scholars, to be by them preserved in Arabic dress, and transmitted again to the West at the close of the Middle Ages.

For our immediate interest the result was that Islam became a massive intellectual system, the equal of scholastic Christianity itself in its philosophic basis and dogmatic elaboration. To think that on the basis of scholastic dogma Christianity can make any great headway against Islam is a vain imagination. For Islam met Christianity in that form in the days of its youth, and by the labours of as great intellects as had been employed on the elaboration of the Christian system was made impregnable against it.

Nor must we forget that through all this influx of more or less alien and Christian material and modes of thought, the powerful and somewhat sinister genius of the prophet of Medina maintained itself. The influx of Greek thought produced a certain amount of agitation in Islam. It had its free-thinkers (*mutakallimīn*) who, to the scandal of the pious, questioned everything, and brought the apparatus of logic to bear on the discussion of the most sacred subjects. It had its heretics (Mu'tazilites). The pious fell back upon the Qur'ān and tradition. Thus, as any religion which has spiritual strength left in it must do, Islam preserved its distinctive type

against the inroads of a culture which would have destroyed it, until it was able to assimilate that culture and make it its own. This it did in the end. And having done so the system so formed became itself a tradition. Christianity escaped from its scholastic shell at the Reformation. Islam still awaits that deliverance and new birth. The West has outstripped the East in science and culture, and is busy just now paying back the debt it has owed to Islam since the revival of learning in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. What will be the effect upon Islam of the infusion of the Western spirit into the East it is impossible to say. At present Islam is doing what it did before, falling back upon tradition. It will learn from the West in everything but religion. In religion it will learn nothing nor even acknowledge that in religion the West has anything to teach it. But when new life begins to stir no religion can permanently rest upon tradition. Sooner or later the new spirit will begin to affect it. There are indications that it is already beginning to do so—especially in India and Egypt. Whether the result will be a better understanding with Christianity, it would be rash to predict, though it does seem to contain the promise of that. At any rate the scholastic system of Muhammadan theology is almost bound to be loosened. Something analogous to the liberation of Christianity at the Reformation time will take place sooner or later, and Islam will begin to adapt itself to the modern spirit.

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